Adam Lallana + Robbie Fowler + 1965 FA Cup winners + Patrik Berger + 10 pages of glorious goal celebrations

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Mamadou Sakho

THE LION ROARS

MAKING IT BIG – AND GIVING IT BACK







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Editor David Cottrell **Assistant Editor** William Hughes **Writers** John Hynes, Simon Hughes **Art Editor** Neil Haines **Designer** Lisa-Marie Critchley **Contributors** Ged Rea, Dave Ball, Glenn Price **Photography** Press Association, Getty Images, John Powell, Andrew Powell Imagery, Nicholas Taylor © Liverpool Football Club & Athletic Grounds Ltd. **Cover photo** Nicholas Taylor **Published by** ProgrammeMaster Ltd **Managing Director** Lee Berry **Circulation Manager** Paul Smith **Subscriptions** Shivanni Sohal **Head of Advertising** Rob Williams 020 7121 5033 **Advertising Sales** 020 7121 5005 www.programmemaster.com Tel 020 7121 5000 Fax 020 7121 5001 Email LFCMag@programmemaster.com. To subscribe call 08700 20 20 20 or visit www.programmemaster.com **Printed by** William Gibbons



RED REIGN

Jordan Henderson is mobbed after his stunning strike in the 2-1 win over Manchester City. The vice-captain's effort also earned a round of applause from a delighted Brendan Rodgers.



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PERFECT 10

The greatest footballer to grace the game was the guest of honour for the Reds' fixture against Manchester United. Brazilian ace Pele is pictured acknowledging the rapturous reception that he received from the Kop.





FLY PAST

Tickets for Liverpool v Manchester United fixtures are always very much in demand. This group of pigeons were not about to miss out on the action as Brendan Rodgers' men went head-to-head with their longstanding rivals.

1 STADIUM FOR ALL SEASONS

The expansion of Anfield gathers pace – and official website visitors have been able to enjoy time-lapse videos of the construction process, while fans at the ground will have noticed the steel structure of the new Main Stand which will add an extra 8,500 seats to that side of the stadium.

Liverpool FC's operations director Andrew Parkinson says: "We're building something that will be Anfield 21st century, but it's really important that it has a leaning to the past and our heritage as well. It's got to provide fantastic facilities and it will do, but it's also important that you feel you're still at Anfield. So while it's a new stand it has to be very much in keeping with the rest of the stadium and feel that it's at Anfield."

The new stand is due to open in time for the start of the 2016/17 season.











2 ROAD TO MALAYSIA

Liverpool will return to Malaysia in July as part of their 2015 pre-season tour. The Reds will face a Malaysian XI at Kuala Lumpur's Bukit Jalil National Stadium on Friday 24 July. The club's chief executive officer, Ian Ayre, says: "In 2011 the support we received was incredible, not only from the 80,000 fans that watched us play at Bukit Jalil, but all our supporters in Malaysia throughout our visit. The tour gives our fans a chance to see the team up close, no matter how far away from Anfield they might live."

For more information on ticketing and general tour details please visit www.lfctour.com.



POINTS CLEAR

Twenty-first century Anfield; a return to Kuala Lumpur and LFC's M&M serve up some Melwood fun

3 EL PING-PONG

Liverpool's Spanish full-back duo showed their sporting prowess at Melwood recently when they played each other at table tennis. Filmed by LFCTV, it was a close-run thing between two accomplished ping-pong players, but Alberto Moreno eventually beat Javier Manquillo by 11 points to 8, with team-mate Jose Enrique watching from the sidelines.

















Mamadou Sakho may be a mean and magnificent central-defender but he has a heart of gold, too, as John Hynes discovers

Tough love

While growing up in the 18th Arrondissement of Paris, an area described as similar to London's Tower Hamlets, Mamadou Sakho's life was far from easy. As he puts it: "I know what it's like to be a kid with an empty fridge."

Instead of raging against the rights and wrongs of that situation he focused on a single goal: making it as a professional footballer. He was determined to eventually get there and told everyone as much.

"Nothing is given to you for free," he says now. "You really have to work for it and that's what I've done to get to this point. You need talent and the right mental approach. Being a footballer is like any job in that you have to put in lots of effort. Hard work binds everything together – that's why I've always given everything."

At the same time as putting all of his efforts into making it in the game, Sakho promised himself that if his stated ambition did become a reality he would do his best to give something back and try to help people less well off. That's why a lot of his spare time is taken up by working for his charity, AMSAK, as well as his ambassadorial role visiting local schools with Liverpool FC Foundation.

"There is nothing more beautiful than seeing the smile of a kid or family that

"I was that kid who needed something so it's great to give back"

you've helped," he points out. "I was once that kid who needed something, so it's great to be able to give back."

Mamadou feels so strongly about his efforts for good causes that he is already certain his post-playing life will revolve around charity work. "Obviously I intend to be a footballer for a long time yet," the 25-year-old says. "But when the time does come to put away my boots, I'm pretty certain I will get even more involved in the charity work."

Until then though he only has one aim: to help Liverpool FC compete alongside Europe's best clubs on a regular basis. "You need to know what you want in life. You have to aim for the top and that's why we are all here at Liverpool. We all have the same objective – to be in the Champions League. We have got to give our best to get there because it isn't easy and there is a lot of competition."

Prior to Christmas, talk of the Reds fighting for a place in the top four going into this month would have quickly been dismissed. But a great run of form from mid-December until the middle of March propelled them up the table and into contention for a Champions League place.

Key to the change in fortunes was Brendan Rodgers' deployment of a three-man defence with wing-backs providing the support on the flanks. Operating alongside two other centre-backs wasn't something Sakho had experienced too often in his career. "As a professional I had never played three at the back before [this season]. However, while coming through the youth system at PSG we used a three-man defence from time to time in order to give us experience of different set-ups and tactics. It's something that seems to suit me as an individual and if it works for the team that's the most important thing.

"It seems ideal, not just for me or the defence, but for everyone. It's a system that allows us to show all of our qualities and demonstrate what we can do both as a team and as individuals."

More often than not, the trio in front of Simon Mignolet has been Sakho, Martin Skrtel and Emre Can. That doesn't mean they are automatic choices, with the Parisian quick to point out that half-a-dozen players have their eye on those particular


Access denied!


Heads he wins

positions in the starting eleven.

"In general, things have gone well for us [Sakho, Skrtel and Can] but it's not just us. There are six players competing for those places. Myself, Emre, Skrtel, Dejan [Lovren] and Glen Johnson. It's really healthy competition. During training we have a laugh and get on well together. I think any of the others could easily be in those positions.

"We are quite different personalities and maybe that's why three at the back has worked well most of the time. When you want to build a house you need a variety of people, from a builder to an electrician to a carpenter and so on. The main thing is it's solid. As a unit we've been a solid defence."

Keeping six consecutive away clean-sheets in the league between the trip to Burnley on Boxing Day 2014 and the journey to Swansea City on 16 March 2015 was testament to what Sakho's sentiments. The last time a Liverpool side were so solid on their travels in league action was under Bill Shankly in 1972.

Sakho is well aware of the historic significance associated with such landmarks. "It's important to appreciate the history of the club you play for," he believes. "Obviously I'm from Paris and spent 13 years at PSG. But I'm a Scouser now and I've read about LFC on the Internet and tried to learn plenty.

"We're all different people at the back and maybe that's why it works"

For example, I read recently that there was a spell in the 1980s when Liverpool and Everton were the most successful teams in the whole country. Liverpool would win the league one season, then Everton would, then Liverpool, then Everton again and then Liverpool again.

"So I know that equalling the record for away clean-sheets in the league is a good achievement and one we should be proud of. But it's not about the three at the back – it's a collective effort. I always believe that the first defender is your striker. The group effort of defending starts with him and then continues with everyone else."

The same collective philosophy applies when it comes to the team trying to produce attractive, passing football. Sakho thinks it's not just the job of the midfielders or the attackers to be creative in possession. "First and foremost my main job is to defend, but certainly you have to offer a plus to the team too. I try to play clean passes to the feet of the midfielders, because if you don't do that it makes it harder for them to do their job.

"Distribution from the back is an important part of my game. You could say that maybe from time to time I take the odd risk with some of my passes. I think you have to speculate to accumulate. If you don't take risks in life you can't improve or advance. And the person who never gives the ball away is the person who never



Foundation ambassador

takes any risks. You have to try things. Sometimes they might not work, but you always have to try if you want to open teams up."

Softly spoken, Sakho's off-field persona appears very different to the combative centre-back we witness in match action. "I'm proud of my qualities and one of them is aggression. I just do what I've always done, try to play hard and strong. I enjoy the battle against big strikers in the Premier League. You have to have a presence [in English football], otherwise you will be wiped out. You have to be up for it and ready when there are physical challenges or elbows flying. I don't think there are many malicious players around, but there are plenty who challenge hard,



That winning feeling

"I just do what I've always done: try to play hard and strong"

particularly centre-forwards."

Competing with them is all about timing, Mamadou believes. "You have to control and channel your aggression. It's about when to use it [aggression] and I think I know how to do that because I don't get many yellow or red cards." Whatever happens between now and the end of the season Sakho and his colleagues deserve credit for the mental strength they showed in turning around their fortunes in 2014/15. Obviously doing so wasn't easy, and he admits some honest conversations were required to get the results back on track.

"It was a case of everyone speaking openly. What exactly was said will remain in the dressing-room. I always think you should protect the group in a situation like this. Let's just say there was a collective realisation that things needed to improve. We were positive about it all and when everyone has that attitude you can do so much."

Different class

Mamadou Sakho regularly takes time-out after training to visit All Saints Primary School in Anfield to continue his support-work with Liverpool FC Foundation, the club's official charity.

As part of his ambassadorial role with the charity he visits the school throughout the course of the season to assist Foundation community coaches who deliver football sessions for the pupils every week, as well as helping the children with their French Language studies.

"I've been part of the 'On the Ball' initiative at All Saints for over a year now and I really enjoy being involved and having the opportunity to give something back," he says. "If I can play a part by sharing my skills and knowledge I am more than happy to support."

During his last visit Mamadou was interviewed by the BBC's *Match of the Day Kickabout* presenter Ed Bearryman, for a feature which first aired in April on BBC One and the kid's channel CBBC channel.


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FOWLER

Two-score questions to celebrate the ace marksman's big birthday on Thursday 9 April



1 How many goals did Fowler score at Old Trafford in his Liverpool career?

2 From which club did Robbie return to Liverpool on a 'free' in the January transfer window of 2006?

3 What was his surname as a Liverpool schoolboys footballer in the early 1980s?

4 "It was a real mudbath and we were losing 1-0. Stan Collymore got the ball out on the left and put in a great cross and I met it full on the volley from close in. Yeah, I enjoyed that one." Against whom had Fowler scored in April 1997?

5 When club skipper Jamie Redknapp was ruled out after knee surgery, with whom did Fowler share vice-captain duties for the 2001 Worthington Cup final against Birmingham City in Cardiff?

6 Where does Fowler's Armani white suit from the 1996 FA Cup final agsinsdt Man United currently reside?

7 Who are the only four men to score more goals for Liverpool – as of the start of March 2015?

8 "Michael Owen's pace was spectacular and that made him special. Robbie was different – I'd never seen such a sharp goalscorer before. He was so cool when it came to putting the ball away." Which fellow Reds striker made this observation?

9 Whom did Robbie accidentally kick in the face in a half-time penalty shoot-out during the Liverpool-West Brom game at Anfield in February 2013?

10 Who is the only Liverpool player to score at least 20 Premier League goals in successive seasons since Fowler did in 1994/95 and 95/96?

11 At which London ground on 26 August 1995 did he score his 50th goal for the club?

12 Who'd been the last Liverpool player to score five goals in a match



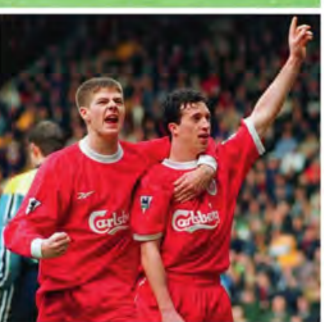


AT 40 THE QUIZ

– how much do you know about one of LFC's greatest strikers?







before Robbie did it against Fulham at Anfield in the League Cup second-round second leg of October 1993?

13 True or false: Fowler was on the bench for the 2007 Champions League final against Milan in Athens?

14 What was the official time of Fowler's fastest-ever hat-trick in Premier League history, against Arsenal at Anfield in August 1994?

15 In total how many Premier League hat-tricks did he score?

16 And to date who's the only player to have scored more Premier League hat-tricks?

17 True or false: Fowler's goal against Alaves in the 2001 UEFA Cup final was his last in Europe for Liverpool.

18 Fowler is one of three Liverpool players to have missed a penalty in a Premier League Merseyside derby – who are the other two?

19 Prior to last year's Celebration of the 96 match, which was the last non-competitive Anfield game in which Robbie appeared?

20 And for whom was his last competitive appearance at Anfield?

21 Fowler, with nine, has scored the most Premier League goals for Liverpool against Arsenal – who, with four goals, is next?

22 Against which team did he once score in both legs of a League Cup semi-final?

23 In the legendary first 4-3 match against Newcastle United at Anfield in March 1996 who provided the assists for Fowler's two goals?

24 Which former Red did he nutmeg before scoring with a shot timed at 78mph against Aston Villa at Anfield in March 1996?

25 Robbie scored his last two Liverpool goals in a 4-0 Anfield win



over Sheffield United – which South American made his debut for the Reds in the same game?

26 In what season did Fowler first wear the no9 shirt for Liverpool?

27 And in turn who took Robbie's no23 shirt that same season?

28 Which two managers handed him his debuts for club and country?

29 Fowler scored just once against Liverpool – for which team?

30 What were the names of the first two racehorses that he and Steve McManaman co-owned?

31 How many times did Fowler win the PFA young player of the year award: once, twice or three times?

32 Robbie played a handful of games for Blackburn in late 2008 before heading Down Under – who was Rovers boss at the time?

33 Who was in goal for Manchester United at Anfield in March 2001 when Fowler scored the first of his six goals against the Red Devils?

34 Name the two Australian sides for whom he appeared in 2009 and 2010 respectively…





35 Which journalist co-wrote Fowler's autobiography of 2006?

36 What's Robbie's middle name?

37 When Fowler famously protested against a penalty decision in his favour at Arsenal in March 1997, who scored from the rebound when Robbie missed the resultant spot-kick?

38 What's the first name of Robbie's boxing cousin, a 2014 Commonwealth Games middleweight gold medallist?

39 How many goals did Fowler score for England?

40 Curveball question: Robbie was invited to feed which exotic beasts in an ambassadorial role for the club in February?







HOW DID YOU SCORE?

All 40 correct: wow – the quiz equivalent of a sweet Fowler finish into the bottom corner.
Between 20 and 40: very good, but you could do with some work on your positional play in and around Robbie's Wiki page.
Less than 20: dear oh dear oh dear – it's back on the box-set training field for you with LFC season-review videos from the 1990s.

ANSWERS **1.** Four goals: two against Manchester United in a 2-2 draw in October 1995, and two v Aston Villa in the FA Cup semi-final of March 1996; **2.** Manchester City; **3.** Robbie Ryder – it was his mum's surname; **4.** Against Everton in the Goodison derby of that season; **5.** Sami Hyypia – Fowler was formally captain while Hyypia tossed up ahead of the subsequent FA Cup final v Arsenal and UEFA Cup final v Alaves; **6.** It's in the National Football Museum in Manchester's Urbis Centre; **7.** Ian Rush (346 goals), Roger Hunt (286), Gordon Hodgson (241) and Billy Liddell (228) – Robbie has 183 goals, along with Steven Gerrard at the start of March 2015; **8.** Karl-Heinz Riedle, who played upfront with both in the late 1990s; **9.** Comedian John Bishop – both were blindfolded to raise awareness of the Seeing is Believing charity; **10.** Luis Suarez in 2012/13 and 13/14; **11.** White Hart Lane in a 3-1 win over Tottenham; **12.** Ian Rush – a decade earlier in a 6-0 league win over Luton Town at Anfield in October 1983; **13.** False – but Robbie did come on as an extra-time sub in the semi-final second leg against Chelsea at Anfield; **14.** Four minutes and 33 seconds; **15.** He's scored nine Premier League hat-tricks; **16.** Alan Shearer with eleven hat-tricks; **17.** False – he scored twice in a 3-2 defeat to Galatasaray in Istanbul in a Champions League group game in December 2006; **18.** Dirk Kuyt (October 2011 at Goodison) and Daniel Sturridge (January 2014 at Anfield) – Robbie missed in a 3-2 win for the Reds at Goodison in April 2001; **19.** Steven Gerrard's testimonial against Olympiacos in August 2013; **20.** For Cardiff City in a League Cup fourth-round tie against Liverpool in October 2007; **21.** Peter Crouch; **22.** Crystal Palace in February and March 1995; **23.** Stan Collymore and Steve McManaman; **24.** Steve Staunton; **25.** Javier Mascherano; **26.** Season 1996/97 when Ian Rush left for Leeds United; **27.** Jamie Carragher; **28.** Graeme Souness (Fulham v Liverpool in September 1993) and Terry Venables (England v Bulgaria in March 1996); **29.** For Manchester City in a 2-2 draw at the City of Manchester Stadium in December 2003; **30.** Some Horse and Another Horse; **31.** Twice – in 1995 and 1996; **32.** Paul Ince; **33.** Fabien Barthez; **34.** North Queensland Fury and Perth Glory; **35.** David Maddock; **36.** Bernard; **37.** Jason McAteer; **38.** Antony (Fowler); **39.** Seven goals: against Mexico (March 1997); Cameroon (November 1997); Ukraine (May 2000); Mexico (May 2001); Albania (September 2001); Italy (March 2002); Cameroon (May 2002); **40.** Kangaroos – as part of his trip to Australia to officially launch the club's pre-season tour later this year.

YESS

We've scored – let's go mad! The best pictures of the best Liverpool goal celebrations this year. Captured by club photographers John and Andrew Powell



Rickiiieeeee!!! The local lad has just scored the crucial second goal to seal victory at Aston Villa on Saturday 17 January, finishing coolly from the edge of the box, running over to the away section of the Doug Ellis Stand – and disappearing among the ecstatic travelling Reds



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Pick that one out
Jordan Henderson slides to his knees after reacting quickest to Philippe Coutinho's blocked shot to smash home the opener against Burnley at Anfield on 4 March – the vice-captain can clearly add goal celebrations to his list of superlative all-round attributes


HENDERSON
14



Do the Studge
Alberto Moreno had been practising Daniel Sturridge's dance at Melwood the day before the striker's winner at Crystal Palace in February's FA Cup tie – now for the real thing!

Raining champ
Whichever way you look at it, there's no mistaking Raheem Sterling's (a) cool head and precise technique amid a posse of opponents, and (b) sheer delight at putting Liverpool two goals up on 73 minutes at a rainy Southampton on 22 February



Eye of the tiger
Nine minutes after entering the fray as a substitute, and with the game locked at two-apiece, Mario Balotelli wins it for Liverpool against Tottenham in a thrilling contest at Anfield. The striker takes it all in his stride before being mobbed by team-mates


KRTEL
37



Lazar guided
Lazar Markovic scores his first Premier League goal for Liverpool with an opportunist finish at Sunderland on 10 January. Skipper Steven Gerrard is the first to offer his congratulations

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Swing when you're winning

Down the decades LFC's most famous players have relished a round of golf

Incredible football knowledge, the ability to motivate players to perform at the highest level, and all while remaining humble. As the men who masterminded Liverpool FC's greatest era of success, Bill Shankly and Bob Paisley had plenty in common. Away from the pitch they also shared a mutual dislike: golf. "Anti-golfist" was how Ian St John described Shanks when explaining why his manager felt the game should be ignored for various reasons – "not least that it made your legs tired." Shankly believed golf put unnatural stress on the body and banned his squad from playing. Not that it stopped them.

Dalglish, Clemence, Hansen, Neal, Callaghan

In the 1960s striker Roger Hunt and goalkeeper Tommy Lawrence became keen golfers and word of their extra-curricular activity inevitably got back to the Anfield hierarchy. Outraged, Shankly phoned their local golf club and demanded: "Have you got my boys there?" The duo had tipped off the secretary who tried to bluff the Reds boss. But he saw right through it and his message to "tell them to go home" was duly passed on.

Although against the sport, it was Shanks who helped fuel defender Tommy Smith's enthusiasm for golf when the team were staying in a hotel with an adjacent par-three course. To alleviate the boredom the players were allowed to enjoy a round, and when Shankly saw Smith hit a decent shot he declared him "a natural."

Smith and team-mates including St John then visited the Grange Park course in St Helens. 'The Anfield Iron', as Smith was popularly known, recorded double-figure scores on each of the first three holes and his patience was running out until he struck a hole-in-one on the fourth. That achievement wasn't enough to sustain his interest, but St John continued to play and later became a regular in pro-am events.



The Saint and Ron

On one of those occasions, just prior to the Scottish Open at Gleneagles, the Saint finished a round with an eagle while Nick Faldo had to settle for a birdie. At Turnberry in a BBC celebrity competition he was paired with actor Sean Connery and inflicted a surprise defeat on major-winning duo Lee Trevino and Sandy Lyle.

The anti-golf stance in the Liverpool manager's office continued when Paisley succeed Shankly in 1974 and didn't like members of his squad anywhere near bunkers or fairways. Left-back Alan Kennedy recalled: "Golf made players walk miles and you might pull a muscle swinging the club. Bob wasn't happy if players organised golf days for testimonials. He could cope with the drinking, but not golf."

Despite this, Paisley signed a very keen golfer in May 1977. In fact at one point Alan Hansen's sporting ambitions had revolved more around the golf ball than the football. He's since confessed: "I've always been a realist and knew that I'd have a better career playing football than golf, even though golf's my first love."

"Golf made players walk miles and Bob felt you could pull a muscle"

That preference is understandable when you realise Hansen's family home in Sauchie was situated just 100 yards from Clackmannanshire Golf Club. As a youngster he was a reserve for the Scottish Boys golf team in a match against England. Even when he became a professional footballer with Partick Thistle he couldn't stay away from the course, once playing in a golf competition on a Saturday morning before lining up for the Jags later.

Hansen's golfing knowledge has seen him present TV show *The Magic of the Masters* when he interviewed Seve Ballesteros and Jack Nicklaus. It's no surprise that he resides near Hillside Golf Club in Southport where neighbour and close friend Kenny Dalglish is his regular playing partner.

Former LFC defender Gary Gillespie is a regular at the nearby Southport & Ainsdale course and admits: "Kenny and Hansen are really competitive. Ronnie Whelan and I have taken them on a few times and they are very difficult to beat. Kenny's handicap is quite dubious, though. I think he just makes it up. Playing with him can take some time too as he's quite tight when it comes to golf balls. If he loses one in the rough he'll spend ages looking for it. But nobody takes as long as Howie Gayle. He's keen to play but sometimes it's taken him up to six hours to finish 18 holes. Golf is a great way for all of the former players to keep in touch and still be competitive."




Er, Craig – that's not quite what we meant

One wonders what Paisley made of playing team-mate Berry Nieuwenhuys in the war years. The South African joined Liverpool in 1933 and went on to score 79 goals in 257 outings. Along with his football commitments he was also a coach at West Derby Golf Club. In 1946 he even rushed back from the LFC summer tour of America to enter the British Open and missed the cut by just two shots. The same summer saw him compete in the Irish Open where he finished amongst the money-winners. When he retired from football two years later he returned to his homeland to work as assistant coach to golfing great Bobby Locke.

Julian Dicks, left-back with Liverpool in the 1990s, didn't reach the level of Nieuwenhuys but he did attempt to become a professional golfer. "I'd been playing since I first injured my knee when I was 22 – the doctor had told me that all the walking would be good for it," he once explained. "By the time I was 27 I was playing off scratch [handicap of zero or below] and had the same coach as Colin Montgomerie. I even shot a couple of holes-in-one – which can be an expensive habit when you're playing with 20 other people and have to buy them all a drink [as tradition dictates].

"Golf's meant to be a gentleman's sport, but I tended to lose my rag when I fluffed a shot. I ended up smashing loads of my clubs. That's me though – I like to do things properly and I can get frustrated if things aren't working out. Anyway, my knee eventually ended that career as well. It started swelling up so much I couldn't play more than nine or ten holes."

The life of a footballer may have changed considerably since the days of Nieuwenhuys, St John and Hansen, yet the sight of players spending their free time on the golf course has remained a constant. During his eight

"I tended to lose my rag when I fluffed a shot and smashed my clubs"

years on Merseyside, central defender Daniel Agger was regularly rated as the best player at the club by his team-mates. Ex-Reds Jay Spearing, Stephen Darby and Martin Kelly still meet up to play a round when their schedules allow it. Skipper Steven Gerrard's interest in the sport has seen his charity foundation host golf days and he's even taken some tips on his game from Ryder Cup-winning captain Paul McGinley. And of course Craig Bellamy infamously demonstrated his swing after scoring against Barcelona in the Nou Camp in 2007.

So why are footballers fascinated with the sport? St John reckons he understands the attraction. "The beauty of golf for various sportsmen who have operated at the highest level in fast tempo, contact sports, is that they can play with a fine competitive edge right down to the last of their physical resources," he reasons. "Golf doesn't have magic. It doesn't, as some people say, heal the mind. You cannot forget everything when you walk on to a golf course – your worries don't go away – but you can put them on one side for a few hours. You can enter another world and concentrate entirely on that old urge to win.

"An ageing footballer cannot say: I played Hampden, San Siro or Anfield the other day and I did rather well. But when he takes up golf he can say he played St Andrew or Wentworth or Turnberry or Carnoustie."

Rory's gaffe

When Rory McIlroy won the British Open at Royal Liverpool in Hoylake last summer he clearly forgot where he was while making his victory speech. "I'd just like to say that, despite me being a Manchester United fan..." he started before some good-natured booing from the crowd. He went on to say that the support from the Merseyside public had been great.

Rory's compatriot Darren Clarke is a Liverpool fan, despite his father favouring the city's other team. "My dad was a Blue and it often happens that way. They are my team, I'll support them through thick and thin."


Rory the Red Devil

The Golf Coast

From Fairhaven just north of Blackpool down to Heswall on the west coast of the Wirral Peninsula, some 40 miles as the crow flies, are some of the best golf courses anywhere in the world – and right in the middle is Liverpool. Welcome to England's North West, also known as the Golf Coast, where in the last three years the world's best players have teed up for the Open Championship at Royal Lytham & St Annes (founded in 1886) and Royal Liverpool in Hoylake (even earlier in 1869).

It was at Lytham's 16th hole that the late great Seve Ballesteros played a remarkable recovery shot on the way to winning his first Open Championship in 1979 – it held a special place in his heart ever after.


Royal Liverpool, Hoylake

Words: John Hynes



PADDY POWER

At 22 years old Patrik Berger came to Anfield amid the first big wave of overseas players on Premier League shores. In this new book extract he tells Simon Hughes how he'd grown from boy to man

Patrik Berger is the kind of man that women stalk. There he is, striding purposefully through the hotel foyer: tall, olive-skinned, cropped dark hair – generally very handsome.

'He could wear a bin bag and still scrub up,' my mother once told me. That was before she moved predictably and somewhat disappointingly on to Jose Mourinho. Today, Berger is sporting a pair of stonewashed jeans, a plain white T-shirt, sandals and a set of multi-coloured beads around his left wrist. His warm eyes exude kindness and an understated strength. He has manful gritty stubble dotted across a chiselled jaw. Beneath there are the shoulders of a Titan. It is exhausting just watching him.

Not much has changed. Aged forty, Berger remains the drop-dead gorgeous pin-up boy from the wall poster. The female bar staff gravitate in his direction from all sides, like he is a planet with its own orbit. Even though he is initially accompanied by his extraordinarily attractive blonde wife, Jaroslava, it does not stop them gazing.

I decide to tell Berger the information about my mother immediately. In the manner of Roger Moore, his right eye begins an involuntary angular rise as I splutter out the slightly embarrassing tale. His sigh reflects that of a gentleman who has heard this story many times. His response is perfectly indifferent. His fluency in English also makes my ineptitude in foreign languages feel quite shameful. "Well," he begins, with the flick of a hand, "if a lot of women liked me, what can I say? Power is an aphrodisiac. If you play for Liverpool and you are young, you will get the attention, especially if you go to town for a few drinks, for shopping or to dinner. And I do not think there is anything wrong with that. If you are young, free and single – so what?"

Berger's arrival at Liverpool in late summer 1996 acted as confirmation that a footballer with a head shorn like a billiard ball was yesterday's news. There had been Jamie Redknapp and Jason McAteer before him but Berger was distinctive. Who was this talented and mysterious Eastern European with a tawny complexion that belied his heritage? Months before, Berger had scored a goal against Germany at Wembley in the final of Euro 96 only to later finish on the losing side. He was 22 years old; a Bundesliga winner with Borussia Dortmund; a person for whom career possibilities seemed endless. Over the next seven seasons in almost two hundred games he would score 35 goals for Liverpool, the majority arriving via his cannon of a left boot. After scoring twice in his second game for Liverpool, Leicester City's goalkeeper Kasey Keller said he'd never seen a ball move so fast in his life. Steven Gerrard later claimed Berger's shooting was some of the most ferocious he'd ever seen.

"If women liked me, what can I say? You're young and playing for Liverpool"


Paddy now

Yet Berger owed his emergence to something that was completely beyond his control. He was 16 years old when, in 1989, communism collapsed in the old Czechoslovakia. He considers it fortunate that he was afforded opportunities that were not there for previous generations.

"The world opened up," he explains, with a brooding gaze that surely could melt flesh. "The future was exciting. I knew I was living in a free country, a place where I was able to make choices. I was part of the first wave able to have fun. Perhaps that made me seem more rebellious. But surely it's a natural reaction for a person used to being told what to do."

Berger was born in 1973 and raised in District 8 of the Czechoslovakian capital, Prague. It was a standardized existence. He lived in a featureless apartment block. Most people had similar furniture, clothes and aspirations. Like other families, the Bergers were consigned to a waiting list for a Trabant car. There was limited access to music and goods from abroad. In school, Berger was taught that the Soviets had saved his country from the tyranny of the West. Housing, jobs and healthcare were provided. But only if you accepted the system.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the government's emphasis on obedience, conformity and the preservation of the status quo was often challenged by individuals and organised groups seeking greater


erg
VISA

autonomy. Although only a few of their activities would have been deemed political by Western standards, the state viewed any independent action, no matter how innocuous, as defiance of the party's control over all aspects of Czechoslovak life. Those who did not comply were not only intimidated and put under surveillance but also subject to house searches, during which the secret police invaded citizens' privacy while searching for illegal literature. Bribes abounded; the presence of listening devices in homes prevented open speech; there were long lines at the shops; people were imprisoned for filing complaints or signing petitions. If a citizen defected, the family left behind was severely punished. Any person that met with a dissident was interrogated.

Despite the harsh realities, Berger does not look back on his childhood as a struggle. "When you are young, you do not understand what it really means to live in a communist state, because you are not really conscious of anything different," he says. "My parents tried to protect me so I didn't see the bad stuff. I had friends, we played out on the street. I had everything I needed. I remember only a happy time. My parents gave me the very best they could give. We had holidays but only in Czechoslovakia. Some families went to Bulgaria or Poland – states that other Europeans did not want to visit. We did not have much choice. But we still had holidays. I did not know of a different way. Maybe that was comforting."

"Growing up in a communist state did not feel different – I was happy"



2001 FA Cup winner with Sami and Vladi

Berger wondered why he was not able to travel extensively, why he was not able to learn any foreign language other than Russian and, indeed, why he was only able to hear whispers about the achievements of football teams from other countries but never watch them on state television. At the time, though, this all seemed normal. His father would return home each day from his nine-to-five shift as a lorry driver for the local brewery, Prazan, while his mother worked hard teaching infants at a nearby primary school.

"When people ask me what it was like growing up behind the Iron Curtain, most expect to hear stories about bread queues and the police raiding homes. They are usually disappointed when I explain the mundane daily routine."

"I COULD'VE PASSED BUT THOUGHT: LET'S GO FOR IT"

LFCTV recently took Paddy back to his goalscoring home debut for the Reds. For the *One Moment in Time* segment on #LFCWORLD he recalled his two goals against Chelsea in a 5-1 win at Anfield on Saturday 21 September 1996.

"For my first goal Dominic Matteo won a challenge and was running at the defenders and managed to touch the ball with his toe to me. I saw Robbie [Fowler] on the right-hand side and could've passed to him, but I thought: let's go for it. I scored with the right foot.

"For my second goal Macca [Steve McManaman] won the ball, passed it to me, and I was again one-on-one with the keeper. This time I decided to shoot from the edge of the box. It will stay in my memory forever. My wife was there and my little boy, and I couldn't think about anything better than scoring two goals on my home debut."



"Players weren't allowed to move abroad till they were 33"

Berger appreciates that older members of his family would speak less positively about the era than he does, having dealt with the privations for much longer. "The thing was, pretty much everybody had the same. There was not really a gap between rich people and poor people. The families were equal. I was happy. We were not poor; we were not rich. We had food on the table every day. It was ordinary. I cannot complain. I also appreciate that my parents might think differently because they had lived under tough conditions for their entire adult life."

His mother and father were children when, in the 1950s, Joseph Stalin directed the Czechoslovak communists to carry out purges and the nation held the largest show trials in Eastern Europe. Over a five-year period, from 1949 to 1954, the victims included military leaders, Catholics, Jews, democratic politicians, those with wartime connections with the West, as well as high-ranking Communists. It spawned a society based on paranoia. Five years before Berger's birth, an uprising had led to a brief period when the government of Czechoslovakia, led by Alexander Dubcek, wanted to democratise and lessen the stranglehold Moscow had on the nation's affairs. The Prague Spring ended with a Soviet invasion, the removal of Dubcek as party leader and an end to reform within Czechoslovakia. It would be another twenty years before the Czechs had their independence.

Berger remembers the euphoria of the Velvet Revolution. He remembers the masses of protesters huddled in Wenceslas Square, demanding change before being brutally dispersed. Hundreds were arrested. Thousands came back. Within four days, 800,000 people were gathered in Prague's city centre. Remarkably, an anti-government rally was screened on state television. Six months later, free elections took place for the first time since 1948. It all happened in a period when Berger's football career was accelerating. He recognises that history could not have unfolded more conveniently.

"I grew up thinking that life began and ended in Czechoslovakia. Footballers were not allowed to play abroad unless they were 33 years old and had more than 50 international caps. For that achievement you were granted the privilege of movement. Yet few top European teams wanted to sign Czech players when their careers were almost over. They'd end up in countries like Switzerland or Austria, or the German second division. But because there was limited information about football in Germany or England, I did not think of any other place. I was not brought up on the legends of Beckenbauer or Dalglish, so my dream was to play in the Czech First League. That was it."

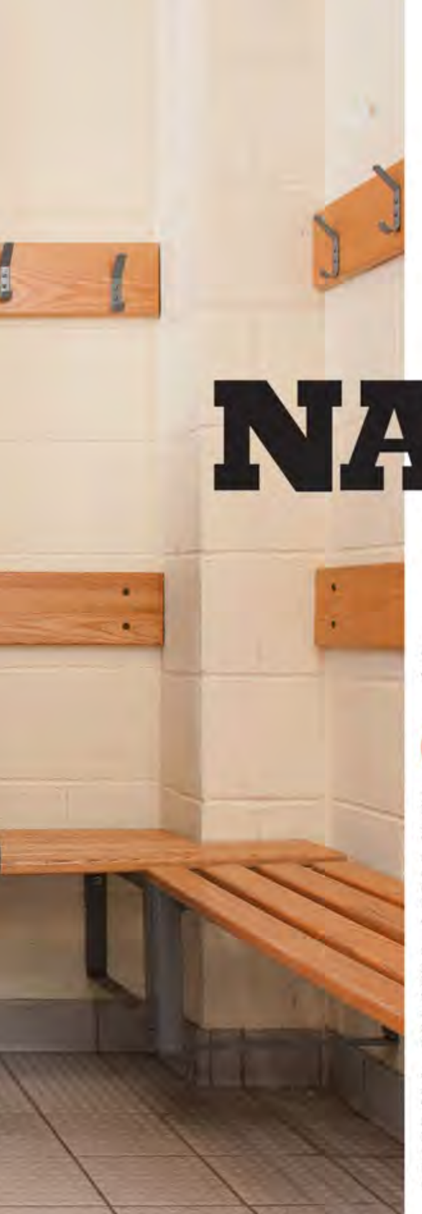


White away kit, January 1999

Men in White Suits is written by Simon Hughes and published by Bantam Press. Other interviewees include Jan Molby, Nick Tanner, Ronny Rosenthal, Jason McAteer, Jamie Redknapp, John Scales, David Thompson, Erik Meijer, Graeme Souness and Roy Evans.

MEN IN WHITE SUITS
SIMON HUGHES
LIVERPOOL FC IN THE 1990s THE PLAYERS' STORIES


CAMERON BRANNAGAN
DOB: 09.05.96
Position: Midfielder
Twitter:
@Cameron246bran
JOE MAGUIRE
DOB: 18.01.96
Position: Full-back
Twitter:
@MaguireJoe
L.F.C.
15



"We've had a bit of stick for the United connection but it's all good fun"

NATIVE SONS

Academy prospects Cameron Brannagan and Joe Maguire grew up supporting different Reds

Can we get the photos done quickly before the rest of the lads come along," young midfielder Cameron Brannagan half-asks, half-jokes as he poses in a corridor at the Academy. Too late. Within seconds, some of his team-mates arrive. Upon seeing the 18-year-old in front of the camera they break into huge grins as the good-natured banter begins. "Smile for the camera!" Jordan Lussey jokes.

Full-back Joe Maguire, 19, is stood nearby, waiting for his turn to be photographed. He has a look upon his face that says he knows he'll be on the receiving end in a matter of second and so it proves. Neither player minds too much. In fact they seem to relish the moment.

"The jokes and having a laugh with each other are all part of a good team spirit," says Cameron, then Joe adds: "You need that lively atmosphere around the place. If the dressing-room is too quiet that's never a good sign – you much prefer a situation where it is loud and for everybody to be completely involved."

As two Manchester lads playing for LFC you probably get some attention from the rest of the squad?

CB: Definitely. [Winger] Ryan Kent classes himself as being from Manchester too, but he's actually from Oldham which is very different. So it's just Joe and me. We get a bit of stick but we're well used to it by now.

JM: We take it and dish it out, just like everyone else. The Irish lads, Daniel Cleary and Alex O'Hanlon, are nearly always involved. They love having a joke.

CB: That [banter] is a big part of football dressing-rooms. You want to take part in it.

JM: Yeah, normally if a new player comes in he gets a few weeks to settle and then they'll start joining in the joking. It makes people feel comfortable and helps to develop team spirit.

Tell us how you ended up at Liverpool FC?

JM: Like a lot of kids, I started kicking a ball around outside my house. There was a team based across the

road called Swinton Boys and I joined in with them. I loved it and carried on playing from there. One day a Liverpool scout was watching a game on a different pitch when he stopped to look at our match for a few minutes. He saw me playing and asked if I'd like to come to Liverpool to have a look around. I'd done some training with Manchester City, but as soon as I came here that was it. My mind was made up. I joined the Under-9s and have been here since.

CB: When I was about five years old I joined my local team, Cadishead. I made friends there and really enjoyed it. We won a few competitions and I got player-of-the-tournament awards. A few clubs wanted to sign me up. I went to Manchester United but didn't enjoy it there. Then I came here and loved it straightaway. I seemed to fit in and found the coaches really good. As a kid the choice is simple: you want to be where you enjoy your football.

Where do your family's footballing allegiances lie?

CB: Man United. When I play against them now it gives me extra motivation. I want to win every game, but I really want to beat them because I know one or two of their players and like to get the better of them.

JM: [laughs] It was United in my house too. We get a lot of banter about that here. My family don't worry too much about who I play for once they know I'm enjoying my football.

"There are only four of us left from when I joined – that's how hard it is"





After being here at the LFC Academy for so long you must have seen a lot of players come and go?

JM: I first joined at Under-9 level and you just assume that you'll all make it. But then as you get older you start to realise that won't be the case. It motivates you to work harder because you want to do all you can to stay here and try to get in to the first team.

CB: There are only four of us [who are still here] from the first year when I signed: me, Connor Randall, Joe and Ryan Fulton. I suppose that when you look at it like that, you get an idea of just how tough it is to make it. That's the way at at every club. You have to deal with it and make sure you stay focused and do your job properly.

Who's the better player out of you two?

CB: Me, without a doubt.

JM: He's a better midfielder, but I'm a better all-round player. He hasn't got my pace.

How has your game developed as you've progressed from the U18s to the U21s in the last few years?

JM: If I had to pick one thing I would say my heading has certainly improved. There have been days when I've felt it's the only thing I've done in training! But it works. It comes from Alex Inglethorpe. He demands a lot and that's what I want.

CB: I think Alex [Inglethorpe] has helped me massively too. He always has me working on my heading and weaker foot or other areas. As a team I think he has made us all improve. We press the opposition very well as a unit and get the ball back quite quickly. If we can do that, it's easier to then play our natural game.

Do you think you've developed tactically?

CB: Definitely. Sometimes that side of the game goes unnoticed by people watching. It can be as simple as how you close down a centre-back. Instead of running straight towards him I'll curve my run, forcing him to go on to





his weaker side. Quite often they'll then just hoof the ball away and we regain possession. If you watch the first team they are masters at really pressing teams.
JM: They're also capable of using a number of formations, so if you are able to fit in to different roles that is a big advantage. Playing in the UEFA Under-19s tournament this season was great for us because we faced teams such as Real Madrid, Ludogorets, Basel and Benfica. They all had their own styles and playing against such a variety of formations makes you a better player.
CB: Going out against Benfica was a big disappointment. I thought we were the better side but it didn't happen on the day. I want to win every competition we enter. That's not always going to happen though so we have to deal with it and move on.

What's the best part of being a footballer?

JM: Coming to training every day. You can never get bored of playing football.
CB: Everything. I've loved football ever since I was a kid. Now it's great to come in here to train and play games. There are no downsides to being a footballer.
JM: I can't think of any either, it's a great job.

How big is the jump from the U21s to the first team?

CB: It's massive. You see those players on TV, but when you go to Melwood to train you realise just how good they actually are.
JM: Within seconds of being on the pitch there you can see the level they are at. It's a much, much higher standard than the U21s.
CB: The first time you train with them you are nervous but the players are very welcoming and helpful, especially guys like Steven Gerrard, Kolo Toure and Lucas.
JM: Once you settle and get a few touches of the ball you start to enjoy it and try to make an impression.
CB: You have to play your natural game. There is no point in being intimidated. Those guys are in our way. We want to get to where they are so we have to make our mark.

Interview by John Hynes

"When you train at Melwood you realise how good the players really are"

The most important thing you gained from working with the first team...

JM: There are lots of things. Brendan Rodgers spoke to me about personality. He said it's not just about being there – you have to make an impact. He wants me to show more aggression and get in the faces of the players I come up against.
CB: The amount of extra training the players do really stood out for me. Guys like Jordan Henderson or Philippe Coutinho always stay behind to work on free-kicks, corners, long-range shooting and other areas of their game. You can see that pays off in matches. It's not about just doing a session with the squad and going straight home. You have to do more.

What are your aims for the future?

CB: I'm hoping to go out on loan. U21s is a good level but I need to play against men. That's tougher because you have players fighting for promotion or relegation, crowds shouting at you and a manager making demands. I've spoke to Alex [Inglethorpe] about it. The experience will help me kick on.
JM: I'm the same. The time comes when you need to win the trust of a manager and show you can be part of a team. Going into another dressing-room is a big test too. We've both been here for a long time so going somewhere else for a few months would be good for us.



Modern footballers have to live with the media, and vice versa

Didi HAMANN



I recently went to interview Xabi Alonso and it was a great experience. As Liverpool fans know, he is a gentleman and always willing to give up his time for such commitments. He never once looked at his watch or suggested we needed to wrap things up soon. Instead he chatted away and answered each question in depth. It was the first occasion I've done such a job and I couldn't have asked for a better interviewee.

Unfortunately not every player approaches that side of football in the same way as Xabi. Deadlines in the media now mean players will agree to interviews two or three weeks in advance. Then if the team loses or they play badly they'll drop out or come up with an excuse. Personally I don't think that's right. If you make a commitment then you should stick to it.

Players who moan about doing interviews are the same minority who will complain about signing autographs. I often found though that a few years later those lads were looking around in the hope that someone would recognise them.

The media is a massive part of football now, but I still think players in England get away lightly compared to the amount of press commitments those in the Bundesliga have to fulfill. I suppose it's human nature that some people enjoy that side of the job and others don't. Jens Jeremies is a good friend of mine and we played together a lot for the German national side. I think he got nearly 60 caps and won the Bundesliga and Champions League. Yet he was very reluctant to do any interviews. We used to joke that he broke out in a rash whenever he saw a TV camera. He just wasn't comfortable in that situation. But if he ever did have to do something he was always professional about it.

"The media is a huge part of football and players must deal with it"



Xabi Alonso is a model professional and a dream interviewee

Nowadays lads at the academies are given media training. In one way that's sensible because you don't want them saying something silly that will upset team-mates or the fans. On the other side though you want them to have their own personality and form opinions for themselves, rather than just following the party line. You don't want to produce robots that all think the same way. Instead you need to bring through youngsters who aren't afraid to express themselves. It's a balancing act and not easy for clubs to get right.

Another area of the media young players need to learn about if they are going to progress in the game is criticism from the media. Professional footballers' performances will always be analysed in the papers and on TV.

I played with guys who would come in to the training ground on a Monday morning, flick through the newspapers and be outraged by what it said about how they had played. They'd question the credentials of the journalist or former player making the comments. But then the same guys often ended up working as columnists or pundits after they'd retired.

Reading or hearing criticism of my own performance – particularly if it was justified – never really bothered me. I could take it. But if you can't then the simple solution is to stay away from all forms of media. That might be impossible to do when you have rolling news channels and the internet but it's the only way to avoid something that will upset you.

Follow Didi on Twitter @DietmarHamann

"ROBIN HOOD HAD NOTHING ON LEICESTER BUT THE LAW MUST TAKE ITS COURSE"

Next in our series celebrating half-a-century since Liverpool FC first won the FA Cup: a quarter-final against Leicester City…

A quick recap of the story so far. First was a third-round win at West Brom in which captain Ron Yeats had conceded a penalty for picking up the ball in the penalty area – it turned out the whistle had been sounded from the crowd! Next came a tie against the Football League's basement boys Stockport County which needed a replay after Liverpool had been held at home while Bill Shankly was away on a scouting assignment. Then came late drama at Bolton in round five as Ian Callaghan scored the only goal of the game to send the Reds into the last eight.

The next installment in Liverpool's quest for a first FA Cup took them to Leicester City, for a quarter-final tie on Saturday 6 March 1965.

Bill Shankly's side could have been forgiven for feeling wary – two years earlier they had met the Foxes at the semi-final stage and gone out. Leicester, inspired by the goalkeeping of Gordon Banks, had edged them out 1-0 thanks to a Mike Stringfellow effort. In his autobiography Banksy, the



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FINAL

Now For The Replay At Anfield

BATTLE OF DEFENCES HAS CROWD ON TIP-TOE

Exciting Exchanges But - Few Direct Shots

LEICESTER C. 0, LIVERPOOL 0

Today's FOOTB... SCOREBOA...

keeper recalled: 'There was only one team in it that day, and they lost 1-0'.

A week before this latest cup clash of the teams, Liverpool had surrendered a lead in a league game at West Ham, losing 2-1 with Geoff Hurst netting the winner. They hoped to recover the winning habit against a mid-table Leicester side who had also suffered a 2-1 defeat on their travels the previous week, at Nottingham Forest.

The home side, somewhat surprisingly, seemed intent on a game plan which put little emphasis on attack. In the final analysis the tie could



have been decided on a couple of moments in the second period.

Ten minutes after the break, Tommy Lawrence's momentum saw the sweeper-keeper live up to his 'Flying Pig' nickname as he came charging out of his area. Leicester's outside-left Stringfellow could have swept the ball towards the empty goal or squared to fellow winger Billy Hodgson and Liverpool would've been behind. Instead he did neither, hastily stabbing an intended pass behind Hodgson. Lawrence was able to regain possession and whack the ball clear.

The Reds' chance to win it came when the outstanding Gordon Milne was through on goal but was thwarted by another fine piece of goalkeeping from Banks, who underlined why he was England's first choice. He'd earlier made a breathtaking stop to deny Ian Callaghan as Tommy Smith recalled in his book *The Anfield Iron*: "At one point a shot from Ian Callaghan took a wicked deflection off the back of Leicester defender Richie Norman. Having flung himself to his right to save Cally's effort, Banksy suddenly twisted and changed direction in mid-air to palm away the deflection to his left.

"Many people are of the mind that if a goalkeeper makes a string of good saves he is a quality keeper. He's got something going for him for sure, but to my mind what makes a great goalkeeper is how few saves he is called on to make. This was very much the case with Banksy, and later, Ray Clemence too."

Shankly was happy enough to take Leicester back to Anfield for a replay just four days later and *Liverpool Echo* reporter Horace Yates was confident the Reds would reach the semi-finals: 'Robin Hood and his Merry Men had nothing on [Leicester manager] Matt Gillies and his Leicester City plunderers, with their unashamed football banditry over the last three seasons. But all in good time the law must take its course. If I mistake not, the day of reckoning could be at hand next Wednesday at Anfield'.

Thousands of fans missed out on the replay with gates closed 45 minutes before kick-off in the scramble to see if Liverpool could lay their Leicester bogey. The same 22 players took to the field under the lights and the stage was set for a night to remember.

"We've avoided a fixture tangle – we have a chance to win it now"

Banks is finally beaten by Hunt

"Cally's shot was deflected but Banks twisted in mid-air to save it"



The great Gordon Banks

Once again the Foxes frustrated Liverpool and their resilience called on all the Reds' powers of perseverance. The visitors could barely get out of their own penalty area during the opening 20 minutes but a combination of doughty defending and Banks' brilliance somehow saw the deadlock remain unbroken. Supporters could have been forgiven for wondering whether Liverpool and the FA Cup were just not to be.

But if there was one man capable of producing a goal when one was needed it was Roger Hunt.

There were 18 minutes remaining when 'Sir Roger' popped up with one of the most important strikes of the season. He had already hit the back of the net 31 times during that 1964/65 campaign when Chris Lawler's free-kick found the head of Yeats. The skipper deliberately cushioned the ball into the path of Hunt who hooked it beyond Banks. His sweetly-struck low shot carried such force it thudded back off the stanchion and back out of the net. Anfield erupted.



Leicester had produced two dangerous moments in the opening half with Lawrence making an acrobatic save to keep out Stringfellow. But over the three hours of football it was the Reds who had done most of the attacking and a jubilant Anfield watched the home team see the game out to the delight of Shankly.

"It was a tremendous battle," he said afterwards. "I thought the team played magnificently to a man. A win has avoided the possibilities of a difficult fixture tangle with the [European Cup] game arranged for next Wednesday against Cologne. Now we have a great chance to win the FA Cup but there are three other very good sides left in it [Leeds United, Manchester United and Chelsea]. This could be the best semi-final round for ages."

Liverpool now had an eighth semi-final to look forward to. The final hurdle on the road to Wembley would take them to Villa Park and a date with Tommy Docherty's Chelsea.



Liverpool sweep into F.A. Cup semi-final again

MASTER MARKSMAN HUNT SHATTERS LEICESTER

Great goal in 72 mins. sends Anfield wild

UNITED STORM BACK TO CRUSH WOLVES

match facts & statistics

LEICESTER CITY 0 LIVERPOOL 0
FA CUP sixth round 06.03.65
Filbert Street

Attendance: 39,356
Referee: AW Leuty
Leicester City: Banks; Sjoberg, Norman; Roberts, King, Appleton; Hodgson, Cross, Goodfellow, Gibson, Stringfellow.
Liverpool: Lawrence; Lawler, Byrne; Milne, Yeats, Stevenson; Callaghan, Hunt, St John, Smith, Thompson.

LIVERPOOL 1 LEICESTER CITY 0
FA CUP sixth-round replay
10.03.65 Anfield

Goal: Hunt (72)
Attendance: 53,324
Referee: G McCabe
Liverpool: Lawrence; Lawler, Byrne; Milne, Yeats, Stevenson; Callaghan, Hunt, St John, Smith, Thompson.
Leicester City: Banks; Sjoberg, Norman; Roberts, King, Appleton; Hodgson, Cross, Goodfellow, Gibson, Stringfellow.

The other sixth-round results:

Wolves 3 Manchester United 5 – eight-goal thriller in United's favour in front of 53,000 at Molineux.
Crystal Palace 0 Leeds United 3 – comfortable for Don Revie's team which had earlier beaten Southport, Everton and Shrewsbury Town.
Chelsea 5 Peterborough 1 – now the Londoners would face Liverpool.



See the show

At the start of May look out for an extra-special show on LFCTV commemorating the 50th anniversary about the first FA Cup win. Producer Mark Platt, who wrote the best-selling book *Cup Kings: Liverpool 1965*, invited members of the triumphant team to a screening of the game at the Woolton Picture House in the south of the city. Turn to page 91 for the inside story from this must-see show.


"It's been enjoyable to play in this system and we owe the boss for that"

BACK ON THE BALL

How the mighty Reds have rediscovered their mojo, as told by Adam Lallana to Simon Hughes

The cuts and bruises on Adam Lallana's legs reflect the battle of a long, hard season. The fire in his eyes reveals what he wants to achieve before it is over.

He confesses there is only a "relative" satisfaction in helping Liverpool rise from the darkness and into the light. Lallana recognises Liverpool's campaign can easily be split into two categories: before and after a 3-1 defeat at Crystal Palace in November; before being a period which he admits fell "way below expectations"; then after, "not too bad."

In spite of the shadow and the pain, it could transpire to be successful depending on league and cup results in April and May.

"At the beginning we just couldn't find a performance," Lallana says. "We were scraping wins when we were getting them. We just weren't playing well. The confidence wasn't there and without that, it's almost impossible.

"There was a combination of factors: the squad being made up of different players; players being missing from last season. There was always going to be a little bit of a hangover, I suppose, off the back of a brilliant year."

He now sees that Palace game as a watershed. "It was a low moment



Joy at Selhurst Park followed despair

in my career," he concedes. "We struggled to string passes together. It was a really, really bad day. I know other players have said the same thing – as well as the manager. But when we [later] went to Selhurst Park in the FA Cup [and won 2-1] Alan Pardew said we were the best team he'd faced this season either with Newcastle or Palace. Under Neil Warnock, we must have been the worst to go there and that was just a few months earlier. It shows you how far we've come."

In the inquests that followed the nadir in South London, Liverpool's manager hatched a plan. Brendan Rodgers instigated a formational adjustment from 4-2-3-1 to a hybrid of 3-4-3 and 3-4-2-1. The switch has since unlocked the potential of Liverpool's most potent attacking players while giving extra security at the back, leaving them less susceptible to counter-attacks. The move also injected additional height and robustness when defending set-pieces and it is an area where Liverpool have looked much less vulnerable.

"Everyone helped each other through it – we all did our bit to improve"

Lallana believes his manager deserves most of the credit for Liverpool's resurgence. After Palace, Liverpool were closer to the relegation zone than the top four. It got worse before it got better, with a 3-0 defeat at Manchester United in December opening up a 10-point gap between the clubs. When this article went to print at the end of March, Liverpool were still within reach of United in the Premier League's standings despite the latter's win at Anfield.

"It has turned around because of the system," Lallana says. "You look at Philippe [Coutinho]. I've always known he's a wonderful player. But since Christmas time his performances have gone to the next level. I think the role the manager has found for him suits him down to the ground. With three at the back, you're getting Emre Can in the team. He's a phenomenal talent. [Mamadou] Sakho has been absolutely brilliant for

us too. And Skerts [Martin Skrtel] has organised well in the middle. We're really comfortable with the shape. The wing-backs have chipped in with some important goals, as have the midfielders. Then upfront the relationship has developed well and its only going to get better. It's been really enjoyable to play in and for that you have to give credit to the manager."

Lallana believes Coutinho has the talent to become one of the great modern footballers. What spectators see – the spectacular match-winning goals like those against Southampton and Manchester City – are only glimpses of his ability. "I love Philippe," Lallana grins. "There are times in training when you stand there open-mouthed. He makes the best players look vulnerable and everyone else look silly. He can do anything. When he's in that mood you don't want to go near him. Honestly, that mood…it's scary.

"I feel as though I can learn stuff off him. His natural ability is frightening. Even though he's younger than me, I look up to him. He's someone you want to get the ball to as quickly as possible. To be playing with him is absolutely brilliant. I think I'm getting a good relationship with him: the same as Sturridge and Sterling."

Few English players are able to move their feet as quickly as Lallana, who like Coutinho, can twist himself out of situations that seem impossible when surrounded by bigger, more powerful opponents. Since Rodgers' tactical shift he has displayed versatility, playing in both wing-back positions as well as right and left inside-forward, where his partner is usually the Brazilian no10.

"I've had a stop-start season because of injuries. But I've played my fair share. I really feel now that I've settled into the club. I want to get myself on the score-sheet a bit more and I think that's coming. I'm expressing myself on the pitch now, though. It makes it easier to do that when you're winning games. Earlier in the season, we weren't playing well. There was massive pressure on us to perform and people were talking about the signings not stepping up to the plate. You don't want to give the excuse that you need a bit of time but the reality is, when so many players come in within a few weeks of each other, that's what it takes.

"Everyone has helped each other through it. Back then it wasn't a true reflection of our abilities, both as a team and as individuals. You look at the way we're playing now and there have been some big performances. I think all of the new signings are doing their bit to help."

Lallana stresses that while results are important, the most important thing for Liverpool in the medium to long term is that the team has developed a "unique identity." In 1955, Willy Meisl, an Austrian football writer based in London, published his book *Soccer Revolution*, in which he argued the future of football lay with defenders who could attack, attackers who could defend and amid a formation in which players switched positions constantly. Liverpool are not quite operating with such breathlessness just yet, though Lallana believes the hunger in the squad can take this team further than even the most optimistic outsider expects.

"In England there's always been a bit of an obsession about nailing down a position," Lallana says. "If you're versatile it's always said that there's someone else better than you. I think

"We've got a young squad that has learnt a great deal this season"

the manager here has proven that it's not the case. Football has changed and continues to change. You have to be adaptable. You look at all the teams that are considered the best in the world right now – Bayern Munich, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, as well as the German and Spanish national sides – they all have players who can move about. Tactically they're very, very good. That's where we want to be – at their level but doing it our way. At the moment there's no team in England playing the type of football that we are."

Lallana continues: "We've got willing workers in the squad. When you've got willing workers who've also got talent, you can go as far as you want to. We know that we've been playing well for a few months now. But it's not enough. We need to be consistent throughout the season, especially if we want to win silverware in the future. The good thing is, we've got a young squad that I feel has learnt a great deal from the bad times early in the season. We're really close. When things need to get said, they get said. Then we move on. That bodes well for the future."





Melwood moment

When it was announced that Steven Gerrard would depart the club this summer, it was suggested widely that he leaves a dressing-room lacking in leaders. "It's sad that Stevie's going," Lallana says. "We learn from him every day. What a player he is. It's an honour to play with him. But in his absence [through injury] others have stepped forward. We've got leaders. There's Jordan [Henderson] who's led the team brilliantly. Behind him, there are other characters. [Mamadou] Sakho was the youngest captain of PSG in their history. We've got Emre [Can], who's emerging as a key player. Then there's Kolo, Skerts, Joe Allen and Lucas. I'd put myself in that group too because I'm 26 and I was club captain of Southampton.

"We're all different from Stevie and we're all different from one another, even though you don't go out of your way to be different. It's something that's in you or it's not. There isn't one way to lead: some can be quiet and still have good leadership skills, taking responsibility. But there's definitely a big group of leaders at the club."

So the spirit is there among a squad of talented players at a similar age. There is a desire to improve. How do Liverpool turn potential and attacking football into medals and trophies: tangible success? Rodgers spoke at his introductory press conference as manager in 2012 about making any game at Anfield the "longest 90 minutes" for visiting teams. Against Manchester City in March, Lallana believes Liverpool were close to a perfect performance. The 2-1 victory has set a benchmark.

"There's not many times where you can enjoy a game because you're so focused and determined to win. Any slip in standard and you get punished. But the football we played that day was the best I've been involved in with any side.

"We want to beat teams by suffocating them: keep the ball, press together; winning possession back by hunting in groups, although the manager gives us the freedom to make decisions. There is a tactical framework but the manager is happy for us to break from it. If you can sense you can win the ball or run at someone, you're encouraged to go with your instinct. The idea is, your team-mates then follow. You can't daydream in this Liverpool team. If one of the lads goes for it, you go too. It gives you a confidence and


Celebrating another Sturridge strike

it spreads around the group. It's quite contagious. When you get that, the fans react. They're passionate and they like to see you working hard. When it rubs off there's no better feeling. That's what happened against City.

"[That game] felt like more than three points. Mentally, it was huge. City, obviously, have won the title in two of the last three seasons. For us to play that way, aggressive in attack and resilient in defence, was massive for us. If we'd lost, people would probably have said that we got back from Besiktas late and blah blah blah. We didn't want to give anyone the chance to fire it at us and use it as an excuse. It shows you how mentally strong we can be – and need to be in the future. That's the level we need to meet. If we do, you never know what might happen, both in this season and next."



"This is football – take your foot off the pedal and you fall behind"

Lallana realises too that if doubt is an uncomfortable condition, certainty is a ridiculous one. "We're not taking anything for granted," he says. "This is football. Take your foot off the pedal and you fall behind, especially at this standard. You've got to use the momentum you've got and drive on for as far as you can."

He is determined to help clinch Champions League football for Liverpool, and to experience the competition when the team is cohesive. "It was disappointing when we played in the group stages this season – I don't think that we had the same identity then that we have now. We didn't have the system and we didn't have half of the confidence. That's why we're desperate to get back into the top four because we're desperate to give it another shot.

"I think we'll be in such a better place next time around. Everyone wants to play in the Champions League. We don't want it to be one season in then five out like last time. We want to be there consistently."


ETIHAD
AIRWAYS



BLAST

A stunning free-kick remains the most vivid memory of Liverpool's exit from Europe in 1992 – but what







FROM THE PAST

happened next for the victors, writes Simon Hughes, makes unpalatable reading for their fans





For AC Milan's panache, Gazza's flatulence and the urbane musings of presenter James Richardson, Channel 4's weekly coverage of Italian football in the 1990s made an absorbing alternative from the embryonic English Premier League.

It was boom time for Serie A. Its teams – miserly in defence, graceful in midfield and potent

in attack – had managers that were tactically shrewd, ambitious in the transfer market and flamboyant with the media. Success was made possible by the spending of presidents like Silvio Berlusconi (Milan), Massimo Moratti (Inter) and Sergio Cragnotti (Lazio) who lavished mind-boggling amounts of lire on exciting players.

From 1975 to 1996, the world transfer-record was broken nine times and on each occasion it involved at least one Italian club. Yet it wasn't just the most decorated institutions that painted Italy's allure. Provincial sides Verona and Napoli had lifted the title in the 1980s and gave inspiration to those felt unlikely to achieve much.

Gabriel Batistuta joined Fiorentina, David Platt went to Bari and Padova signed Alexi Lalas of USA 94 fame. Every player wanted to perform in Serie A, the best league in the world.

One club with particularly bold aspirations was Genoa. They brought in Czech striker Tomas Skuhravy as well as Carlos Aguilera from Penarol of Uruguay. Together they formed one of the most feared partnerships in Italian football, and for one season at least they were the most dangerous.

Liverpool would soon find out why.

The history of Genoa Cricket and Football Club has been compared to that of Torino, who never quite recovered from a plane crash in 1949 in which a generation of star players were lost. Genoa had not been beset by such a tragedy, but since winning

"Genoa were once the biggest club in Italy but had been in decline"


The busy port of Genoa

nine scudettos before 1924 they'd trod most seasons in the shadows between Serie A and Serie B.

Like Torino, usurped by Juventus as Turin's most decorated club, Genoa had been surpassed by Sampdoria, who claimed the Serie A crown in 1991. "In the Twenties, Genoa were the biggest club in Italy," says John Foot, author of *Calcio*. "I would compare them to a Preston, Blackpool or Huddersfield Town – clubs in England that were traditionally massive but fell on difficult times. They've been in decline really ever since and 80 years is a long, long decline."

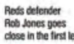
Formed in 1946 after a merger between two local clubs, Sampdoria's ascendacy in the late 1980s was a source of constant irritation for Genoa fans. It was under the guidance of wealthy president Paolo Mantovani that Sampdoria acquired Gianluca Vialli and Roberto Mancini. After winning the title in 1991 they narrowly lost in the European Cup final a year later against Barcelona at Wembley. They also lifted the Italian Cup four times and the European Cup Winners Cup in 1989. But once Vialli left for Juventus and Mantovani died in 1993, the club went into slow decline.

"Genoa fans play on the fact that Sampdoria are only half-a-century old and don't have the same kind of history," continues Foot. "They would say that they're the real city club and Sampdoria have a hotchpotch of johnny-cum-lately fans. So for Genoa fans having to live through the period when Sampdoria became champions of Italy and nearly champions of Europe – just as Genoa's most recent decline started – that period was terrible for them."

In season 1991/92 the draw for the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup paired Genoa with Liverpool, and ahead of March's first leg in northern Italy the Reds stayed in Rapallo on the Ligurian coast. A smile stretched across the face of Liverpool boss Graeme Souness when questioned at the pre-match press conference.

Osvaldo Bagnoli, his opposite number at Genoa, had accused Souness of "dirty tricks" – spreading fibs about the extent of Liverpool's injury crisis to generate complacency in the Italian camp. Mark Walters, Steve McManaman, Ronnie Whelan, Steve Harkness, Mike Marsh and Rob Jones were all struggling for match-fitness, but Souness had allegedly been spinning different yarns to the Italian and English press corps – a trick Bagnoli said the LFC boss had learnt during his playing days with Sampdoria. "I am sorry for him – a Scotsman will never be able to pull one over an Italian! He spoke for a long time with the Italian journalists telling a pack of lies about the physical condition of his players. But then he went round the corner and told the English press the opposite. I'm not falling for it."

Liverpool had beaten Kuusysi Lahti, Auxerre and Swarowski Tirol to reach the quarters. It was their first season in European competition following the


Reds defender Rob Jones goes close in the first leg



"In England we don't get the quality of Aguilera and also Skuhravy"

end of the Heysel ban. Inexperience on foreign fields told and the Reds were fortunate to knock out Auxerre 3-2 on aggregate, after overhauling a two-goal deficit from the away leg.

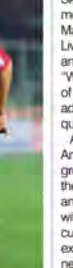
Souness, though, believed Genoa were fearful of Liverpool's European pedigree: "They are scared of us and I want to keep things as secretive as I can. Normally I let the boys know my team as soon as I do, but this time I feel I should keep it quiet. I know how deeply the Italians feel about this game. They will be worrying about what we are going to do. Steve McManaman will play tonight and I know Branco is frightened of him."

Genoa were struggling to sustain form from the previous year. Bagnoli, who'd previously steered unfashionable Verona to the Serie A title in 1985, joined the *Rossoblu* in the summer of 1991 and promptly qualified his new side for the UEFA Cup by finishing fourth in the table. But Genoa occupied a mid-table position when the Liverpool tie came around, having lost 3-0 to Juventus.

Bagnoli was burdened by his relationship with Genoa's volcanically-tempered president Aldo Spinelli. Despite Genoa enjoying their first season in Europe, the coach was beset by injury woes, a slump in form and rows with an unsympathetic media. He tried to defuse the tension.

"It's a unique event but I'm not going to call it the game of our lives. It's not a question of winning at all costs because it would be an honour just to play Liverpool. But if we get through, the joy would be unimaginable."





Dean Saunders scored nine in the previous rounds but drew a blank

In the first leg Genoa outclassed Liverpool. Goals from Valeriano Florin and the Brazilian Branco – with a 35-yard free-kick three minutes just before the final whistle – secured a 2-0 win. Had it not been for Mike Hooper, deputising in goal for Bruce Grobbelaar (missing because of the four-foreigner rule in favour of Steve Nicol, Ray Houghton, Jan Molby and Dean Saunders), the journey home might have been worse for the 1,500 who travelled from Merseyside.

In the return leg at Anfield, which kicked off at the curious time of 7.10pm, the Reds were thwarted by veteran goalkeeper Simone Braglia who according to the *Liverpool Echo* 'was fortunate not to have been penalised for taking more steps than Fred Astaire at goal-kicks' and 'put on a one-man show, defying his opponents with a brilliance which he will surely never repeat.'



Genoa fans today

At the other end Hooper was helpless to stop Aguilera scoring twice, first after combining with Skurhavy then following a three-man move involving Gennaro Ruotolo and Mario Bortolazzi. Ian Rush scored for Liverpool, but the goal was academic and Genoa won 4-1 on aggregate. "We struggled with the movement of Skuhravy and Aguilera," Souness admitted. "You don't get that kind of quality in England."

Among Genoa fans the victory at Anfield is still considered the club's greatest in modern times. In the semis they played Ajax, losing on penalties and missing out on a two-legged final with Torino [the Dutch side won the cup on away goals]. But Genoa's exploits in Europe also resulted in a neglected league campaign where they finished one place above the relegation zone. Boss Bagnoli left for Inter Milan and within 18 months Genoa were relegated to Serie B. "Bagnoli was a great character," says Foot. "He achieved things with smaller clubs similar to Brian Clough at Derby County then Nottingham Forest. But he couldn't really do it at big clubs. He didn't do so well at Inter."

By 1997, chairman Spinelli had sold Genoa and the club's best players followed him out. Stefano Eranio joined Milan, Carlos Aguilera moved to Torino, while Skuhravy signed for Sporting Lisbon. Genoa's greatest success in the next ten years was considered a 5-2 win over Port Vale in the final of the Anglo-Italian Cup.

"Presidents of Italian clubs have a tremendous amount of power and Genoa were no different," Foot adds. "They had a good spell in the 90s but have since experienced more downs than ups. It means the Liverpool games take on extra significance."

Last-eight agony

First leg 04.03.92

Genoa 2 (Florin, Branco) Liverpool 0

Att: 40,000

Genoa: Braglia, Torrente, Branco, Eranio, Collovati, Signorini, Ruotolo, Bortolazzi, Aguilera, Skuhravy, Florin (Onorati).

Liverpool: Hooper, Jones, Burrows, Nicol, Wright, Marsh, Saunders, Houghton, Walters (Venison), Molby, McManaman.

Second leg 18.03.92

Liverpool (Rush) 1 Genoa 2 (Aguilera 2)

Att: 38,840

Liverpool: Hooper, Jones (Venison), Burrows, Nicol, Molby, Wright (Tanner), Saunders, Marsh, Rush, Barnes, McManaman.

Genoa: Braglia, Torrente, Branco, Eranio, Collovati, Signorini, Ruotolo, Bortolazzi, Aguilera (Caricola), Skuhravy, Onorati (Florin).



Back to SCHOOL

Reds defender Becky Easton shows she's got educated feet – blazing a trail on new Master's degree

Liverpool Ladies defender Becky Easton is a student of the game in more ways than one. Voted supporters' player of the year as the Reds retained their FA Women's Super League title in 2014, Becky is combining her footballing commitments with study for a master's degree in sport directorship.

She is also pioneering a pathway for women with her studies – she is the only female on the new course based at Manchester Metropolitan University's business school.

"The course started in September and runs for two years," she explains. "It's like a part-time master's so we only meet up for two full days every six weeks. That is quite intense because the rest of the time is distance-learning. There are a lot of assignments and work to do away from uni which takes up quite a lot of time, but it's all looking at topics I'm very interested in."

Becky has enjoyed a fine career in the women's game at Liverpool, Everton and Doncaster Rovers Belles, winning three league titles, the FA Cup and League Cup along the way. Her first degree was in podiatry (medical care and treatment of the foot) and she worked in the NHS for almost 20 years before turning full-time with the Reds last year.

"I think the uni may advertise the course in women's football magazines"

"I'm fortunate because I'd always done a bit of studying throughout my NHS career, whereas some of the guys on the course have said they hadn't been in a classroom since school so they were finding the research and study difficult.

"I did a bachelor of science at Salford Uni back in 1993 and since then I've done a coupe of health-related master's modules and that does help a lot. When we've had to do a group presentation, I've done the research and referencing as we've tried to divide things up according to our strengths."

The course has been devised by Darren Royle, son of ex-Everton boss

Interview: William Hughes

Joe, and Tony Faulkner, a former youth-team player at Manchester City. "They were interested in the role of the football director and went around the world researching it. They put this syllabus together but opened it up to other sports too and called it the sport directorship course. They sold the idea to Manchester Metropolitan University, and as we go along they're keen to gain feedback from us as to how they can improve it, because I think they're only going to run it for four years.

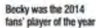
"The aim is to have 25 students each year as they didn't want to flood the market, so their plan is to train up 100 then finish it."

As for being the only woman on the course, Becky hopes that others will follow her lead. "On the first day I was a bit nervous, but I think that was more just generally about attending the course and not knowing who would be there and what it was about. It hasn't been a problem at all – all the guys are great, they are very professional and have made me feel welcome. I think this year the uni is hoping to advertise the course to women's groups and women's football magazines, so maybe next year there will be a few more women on it."

Becky's class-mates among the inaugural intake include some well-known names from the world of sport. "There is Ashley Giles, who is cricket director and head coach at Lancashire County Cricket Club; Steve Round, who was David Moyes' no2 at Everton and Manchester United; Sean O'Driscoll, manager of England Under-19s; and Michael Appleton, the manager of Oxford United.

"David Parsons, who is performance director of the English Cricket Board, is another who is very interesting, and Paul Treu, who was coach of South Africa and Kenya in Rugby Sevens. There are also people from sports business, solicitors and a few agents. A couple fly over from Dubai and





"In the leadership module we had great debates as students and tutors"

Becky was the 2014 fans' player of the year

South Africa to attend the days at uni, so it's a huge commitment.

"The leadership module was great because we have people on the course who have been leaders in high-level sports organisations. That means we ended up debating and having a lot of discussions – sometimes you can learn as much from the other students as the tutors."

Guest lecturers have included a couple of former LFC figures too, with ex-chief executive Rick Parry and director of football Damien Comolli among those to address students.

The course involves practical assignments, and Becky recently spent some time at the 'other' Old Trafford.

"We were split into action-learning groups and I was fortunate enough to have Ashley Giles in mine. He started the course prior to being appointed to the Lancashire job, but we spent two days at Old Trafford last month doing a diagnostic report. It was really interesting to see the differences between football and cricket.

"In football the assets are the players



Paul Treu

BECKY'S DEGREE

1 Personal leadership to develop sporting directors – how cognitive, emotional and mental capacities drive behaviour patterns.

2 Leading a high-performing sports organization – what this looks like up close and learning the building blocks of that culture.

3 Masterminding innovation and change – challenging traditional ways of thinking to create a competitive edge.

4 Sports governance and best practice – to make decisions to optimise performance while demonstrating transparency and accountability.

5 Sporting directorship in practice – delivered through the latest advances in neuroscience and learning technology.

"I'd love to stay involved in the game at a higher level"

whereas in cricket they don't buy or sell them and have a salary cap which has actually just been lowered this year. It's the opposite to football where the players are everything; in cricket it's more about the facilities and off-the-field revenue. For all the work that goes into preparing the cricket pitch, it is only used on about 40 of the 365 days each year.

"At Lancashire the cricket only makes up a fraction of the business


Ashley Giles at Old Trafford

as a lot of the revenue comes from the corporate side of conferencing and concerts and so on. They're currently in the process of building a £12 million Hilton hotel to add to that. Hosting Test matches is vital for them.

"I find that business side of things really interesting and that's the kind of thing I wanted to learn. I know about football, coaching and on-pitch aspects, but I didn't really know too much about the off-pitch side."

So where is it all leading for Becky? "I don't really have a particular role in mind and I don't have any ambitions to become director of football at Liverpool! I enrolled on the the course because I'm coming towards the end of my playing career and I still want to be involved in football but I know coaching isn't for me. I'd love to be involved at a higher level, maybe a decision-making level – as head of performance or something like that.

"I read through the course syllabus, liked the content of the course and thought it would help me meet new people, gain knowledge and skills and generally help develop me."

LFC'S SIX DEGREES

STEVE HEIGHWAY
(engineering)
BRIAN HALL
(mathematics)
SIMON MIGNOLET
(political science)
LIBBY STOUT
(construction management)
GEMMA BONNER
(sports performance)
INGRID RYLAND
(marketing)


Gemma Bonner

Lady in Red

Why midfielder Lucy Staniforth is thrilled to pull on the Liverpool shirt after a long road to recovery

Liverpool Ladies midfielder Lucy Staniforth was delighted to see red last month.

The 22-year-old has been plagued by injury problems since being stretchered off in the FA Women's Cup final of 2013 while playing for Bristol Academy. Soon after signing for Liverpool early in February 2014, she suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury during pre-season training.

It has been a long road back but her mental and physical strength was rewarded when she came on as a substitute in the friendly against Doncaster Rovers Belles on 14 March.

"It was really hard to deal with," she says. "For instance, until recently I hadn't even worn the red kit. I played one game before the ACL injury in which we wore the white change kit. When I joined Liverpool I was quite excited to put on the strip, and I remember that just before we were going to play Sunderland at home I bought myself a red baselayer to wear under the shirt but of course I had never worn it. So returning to fitness, even that was something I was excited about.

"It's been a really difficult year or so and very frustrating. I felt like I'd arrived at Liverpool and Beardy [manager Matt Beard] had said: 'This is what Lucy can bring to the team.' I was so excited, but then I couldn't show anyone what I was capable of doing. I couldn't help or input anything into the games."

Joining Lucy in the treatment room for most of last season was German winger Nicole Rolser, who also suffered an ACL injury in pre-season. Lucy says: "To be honest I don't know if I could have done it if Nici hadn't have been injured too. I know that sounds horrible, but for me it was a blessing in disguise to have someone going through the same thing and able to do the rehab with me. From the word go I just got my head down

"I got injured before I had a chance to wear the red kit"



In training with team-mates

"I think Nici knew what I was going through and she definitely helped"

and worked hard. Seeing Nici return to fitness gave me more motivation to push on and to get fit again. The last three months of pre-season have gone by so quickly but it's really exciting.

"I think Nici and I bounced off each other really well. She definitely helped me through the hard times and I'd like to think I did the same for her. We forged quite a close bond and we're still really tight with each other now.

"It's been really nice to have someone who knows exactly what I was going through and what I'm going through now in terms of getting back playing and wanting everything to happen straightaway. She sent me this lovely message the first week of being back in non-contact training. Nici is a very quiet person and doesn't really say much, so for her to say that meant a lot to me."

Lucy is now hoping to play her part in helping Liverpool Ladies enjoy another successful season. "It just feels like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. It's so nice to be living what I would deem a normal life now. I know I will have to take it step by step, but when you look at the quality in our squad you cannot help but be excited about what the new season may bring."



It's Liverpool's comeback queens!

The buzz on Twitter

Fara Williams @fara_williams47
Absolutely made up for @lstan37 making her return to the field, has worked so hard over the last 18 months and has shown great mental toughness

Gemma Bonner @gembon23
V proud of @lstan37 tonight, delighted to see her back on the pitch with us after all her hard work & showing unbelievable mental strength

Martha Harris @MarthaH19
Absolutely buzzin 4 my little log getting her first appearance in over a year #absoluteballer #soproud @lstan37

Lucy Staniforth @lstan37
Thank you so much for everyone's messages, it really means a lot. To be back on the pitch tonight was amazing. The only way is up from now. P.S. Thank you @KatWise87 @KirstyHicks88 and especially @NRolser couldn't have done it without you

SOUND CITY

BRAMLEY-MOORE DOCK • LIVERPOOL • MAY BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND • 2015

FRIDAY 22ND MAY

THE VACCINES

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING

Spector

NEON WALTZ

SATURDAY 23RD MAY

THE FLAMING LIPS

The Thurston Moore Band

STEALING SHEEP

THE GOASTT
DUTCH UNCLES
ALL WE ARE
SERPENT POWER
THE SUNDOWNERS
THE VRYLL SOCIETY
GULF

SUNDAY 24TH MAY

Belle and Sebastian

GAZ COOMBES

THE CRIBS

DUM DUM GIRLS
CYMBALS EAT GUITARS
BILL RYDER-JONES
JANE WEAVER
BLOSSOMS
THE HUMMINGBIRDS

LATE NIGHT **WAREHOUSE PARTY**

Roni Size Reprazent

EVIAN CHRIST

FAT WHITE FAMILY

BALTIC STAGE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **DIY** AND CURATED BY evol

S W A N S

OKKYUNG LEE
ICEAGE
YAK
BAD MEDS
BARBEROS

F@CKED UP

UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA
SLAVES • THE BOHICAS
BAD BREEDING • MOATS
R. SEILIOG • STRANGE COLLECTIVE

PEACE

DAVE McCABE & THE RAMIFICATIONS
SINGLE MOTHERS • CLARENCE CLARITY
MOON KING • HONEYBLOOD
PALACE

CARGO STAGE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH XFM

GEORGE THE POET

STORMZY • LOYLE CARNER
M.O. • KOF
THABO & THE REAL DEAL

A Q U I L O

FLO MORRISSEY
SEKUOIA
ASTRONOMYY

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Neil MELLOR

Every aspiring youngster could learn a lot from Harry Kane



I wouldn't be surprised if Harry Kane was voted as footballer of the year. I hope he is. This is a striker who on the face of it has the lot: he can shoot, head; score goals in or outside of the box; he has pace and strength and his work-rate is phenomenal. Technically there doesn't appear to be many question marks.

There has been a lot of hype around his performances and that makes his achievements even more remarkable: he just carries on regardless. He hasn't been affected at all. His emergence is one that all young players should think about – especially those lads at Liverpool wondering whether it might happen for them, particularly at this time of year.

When you reach the end of a season as a young player, you think a lot about the future. Nothing is guaranteed. Sometimes it feels like you are not going anywhere. Sometimes it can even feel like you've made a step back.

It's incredibly difficult maintaining focus while balancing ambition and patience. For a long time Kane must surely have had doubts about his chances at Tottenham, a club which like Liverpool is able to recruit players from all over the world – whether that's for the first team or the academy.

The hardest positions to get a chance at first-team level are centre-forward and goalkeeper. Managers will usually go for proven quality in each of those roles because they involve the key responsibilities of scoring goals and keeping them out.

As a teenager you have to have exceptional talent to break through. If you don't, it doesn't mean you can't make it as a footballer, a game which isn't an exact science. Players develop at different rates. Some are greats at 16 or 17 while others become great when they are in their mid-20s. That's just the way it is. If there was more patience, I'm convinced we'd see a lot more English players in the Premier League.

"Even if you don't break through as a teenager you can still make it as a player"



Harry Kane playing at Anfield for Tottenham

As there are not many just now, if I was a young player at the moment and I hadn't established myself for the first team at any club by the age of 18, I'd be looking for a loan. If you go out and prove that you can score goals or keep clean-sheets, it is difficult for the manager to ignore you because suddenly your name appears in the press and more people are talking about you.

The best footballers are usually the most humble ones. Kane had no qualms about heading out to Leyton Orient in League One before he was 18. A lot of young players are reluctant to go even that low because of ego or interference from agents, who want to get their clients as high up the football pyramid as possible. Let us not forget, David Beckham went to Preston North End for a short period when they were in the third tier of English football.

I have written before in this column about the benefit of loan moves: what you learn and how it develops you as a character. Just as much as the player's attitude is important, so is the club he's going to. It might be tempting for example for a player to sign for a Championship club instead of a League One, when in reality the latter club is better for the player.

It is important that Liverpool's young players consider this when weighing up their options at the start of next season – a season which may offer more first-team opportunities through the Europa League. While the focus is always Champions League qualification, should the club be in the Europa League, it might be the Academy prospects who benefit, with more opportunity for first-team action and a chance to do what Kane, for example, has done this season.

Nevertheless, if a player is bold in his decision, confident and determined, he'll get to where he wants to be. Just like Harry Kane.

Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33

The KOP

91 CUP KINGS
Remembering the 1965 FA Cup winners

The bit at the back for Liverpool FC's legions of fans at home and all over the world…

THE MONTH AHEAD

APR

Toon in town for Monday clash

Anfield stages only one first team fixture during April.

The Reds host Newcastle United on 13 April for a spot of Monday night football hoping to gain revenge for a 1-0 defeat at St James' Park back in November.

Since then Alan Pardew has swapped Newcastle for Crystal Palace and the Magpies are currently under the temporary management of John Carver, who has had three caretaker spells at the helm. He said:"I believe in the players and staff I have around me. I am confident we can deliver exciting, successful football and relish my role as head coach of this great club."

Liverpool will be aiming for a repeat of last season's result when they defeated Newcastle 2-1 on the final day of the campaign. Martin Skrtel put through his own goal after 20 minutes but the Reds responded with second-half goals from the Daniels – Agger and Sturridge – to secure the points.

LFC's Premier League schedule for the month kicks off with a crucial clash at Arsenal and concludes with a trip to West Bromwich Albion.

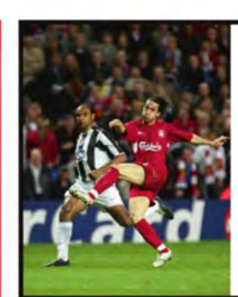


Agger on target v Newcastle



BIRTHDAY REDS

Paul Jones 48 on 18 April
Brad Smith 21 on 9 April
Steve Finnan 39 on 20 April
Becky Easton 41 on 16 April
Martin Kelly 25 on 27 April
Tommy Smith 70 on 5 April
Dominic Matteo 41 on 28 April
Ian Callaghan 73 on 10 April
Johnny Morrissey 75 on 18 April
Milan Jovanovic 34 on 18 April
Albert Riera 33 on 15 April
Fernando Morientes 39 on 5 April
Robbie Fowler 40 on 9 April
David Ngog 26 on 1 April
Colin Pascoe 50 on 9 April



Anniversaries

10 years since Champions League victory over Juventus on 5 April
37 years since the Reds reached the European Cup final with a 3-0 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach on 12 April
27 years since that famous 5-0 win over Nottingham Forest on 13 April
26 years since 96 fans lost their lives at Hillsborough on 15 April
59 years since Ian Callaghan made his LFC debut on 16 April
51 years since a 5-0 defeat of Arsenal secured First Division title

Will the Magpies Phil the force?



CUP THAT CHEERS?

The Reds are hoping their April schedule will include a trip to Wembley. Following their quarter-final stalemate with Blackburn Rovers on 8 March, Liverpool visit Ewood Park for the replay with the prize at stake being a semi-final under the arch against Aston Villa. The replay against Gary Bowyer's side will take place on Wednesday 8 April (7.45pm) with the FA Cup semi-final weekend pencilled in for 17 and 18 of the month.



HILLSBOROUGH MEMORIAL SERVICE 26TH ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday 15 April will be the 26th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster that cost 96 Liverpool fans their lives. Once more the Hillsborough Family Support Group will mark the occasion with a Memorial Service at Anfield's stadium to remember those who died that day.

The service will commence at 2.45pm prompt with access to the stadium possible from 1pm. A one-minute silence will be observed at 3.06pm and the service will conclude at around 3.45pm with the singing of *You'll Never Walk Alone.*

Margaret Aspinall, Chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, says: "Every day we continue to remember those who lost their lives. During this 26th anniversary service we will turn on a light for each and every life that was extinguished prematurely and the eternal flame of the Hillsborough Memorial will continue to light our way through the darkest days.

"For many, 15 April may be a working day and there will be those who are unable to attend. We invite you to join us in thought and spirit and keep us in your prayers at this difficult time."

SEASON-TICKET HOLDERS

As a Season Ticket Holder there will be times when you cannot make it to a Barclays Premier League home match due to holidays or other commitments. If so, don't let your seat go empty and lose out on the opportunity to receive credit against the cost of your Season Ticket next summer.

Use the online Ticket Exchange service to release your ticket. You can use this service as many times as you want during the season.

For more information regarding the Ticket Exchange please visit: www.liverpoolfc.com/tickets/ticket-exchange.



FIXTURE LIST 2014/2015

Date	Fixture	Result
AUGUST		
17	Southampton (H)	2-1
25	Manchester City (A)	1-3
31	Tottenham Hotspur (A)	3-0
SEPTEMBER		
13	Aston Villa (H)	0-1
16	PFC Ludogorets 1945 (H, UCL)	2-1
20	West Ham United (A)	1-3
23	Middlesbrough (H, COC 3)	2-2*
27	Everton (H)	1-1
OCTOBER		
1	FC Basel 1893 (A, UCL)	0-1
4	West Bromwich Albion (H)	2-1
19	Queens Park Rangers (A)	3-2
22	Real Madrid (H, UCL)	0-3
25	Hull City (H)	0-0
28	Swansea City (H, COC 4)	2-1
NOVEMBER		
1	Newcastle United (A)	0-1
4	Real Madrid (A, UCL)	0-1
8	Chelsea (H)	1-2
23	Crystal Palace (A)	1-3
26	PFC Ludogorets 1945 (A, UCL)	2-2
29	Stoke City (H)	1-0
DECEMBER		
2	Leicester City (A)	3-1
6	Sunderland (H, 3pm)	0-0
9	FC Basel 1893 (H, UCL)	1-1
14	Manchester United (A)	0-3
17	Bournemouth (A, COC 5)	3-1
21	Arsenal (H)	2-2
26	Burnley (A, 3pm)	1-0
29	Swansea City (H, 8pm)	4-1
JANUARY		
1	Leicester City (H, 3pm)	2-2
5	AFC Wimbledon (A, FAC 3)	1-2
10	Sunderland (A)	0-1
17	Aston Villa (A)	2-0
20	Chelsea (H, COC SF 1)	1-1
24	Bolton W (H, FAC 4)	0-0
27	Chelsea (A, COC SF2)	0-1*
31	West Ham United (H)	2-0
FEBRUARY		
4	Bolton W (A, FAC 4R)	2-1
7	Everton (A)	0-0
10	Tottenham Hotspur (H)	3-2
14	Crystal Palace (A, FAC 5R)	2-1
19	Besiktas (H, UEL, R32)	1-0
22	Southampton (A)	2-0
26	Besiktas (A, UEL, R32)	0-1^^
MARCH		
1	Manchester City (H)	2-1
4	Burnley (H)	2-1
9	Blackburn Rovers (H, FAC 6)	0-0
16	Swansea City (A)	1-0
22	Manchester United (H)	1-2
APRIL		
4	Arsenal (A, 12.45pm)	
8	Blackburn Rovers (A, FAC 6 replay)	
13	Newcastle United (H, 8pm)	
18	Hull City (A, 3pm) / FA Cup semi-finals	
25	West Bromwich Albion (A, 3pm)	
MAY		
2	Queens Park Rangers (H)	
9	Chelsea (A)	
16	Crystal Palace (H)	
24	Stoke City (A)	
30	FA Cup final	

* LFC won on penalties
^^ LFC lost on penalties

All kick-off times are BST. All Barclays Premier League fixtures are subject to change for the requirements of television and/or for other reasons such as police requests.
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Liverpool FC Foundation is the official charity of Liverpool Football Club. We deliver a range of initiatives that inspire people from all walks of life to make positive change happen for themselves and their communities. Follow us on Twitter @LFCFoundation.

Capital gains

Youngsters book place in London finals as Foundation coaches complete course

Winners Plantation Primary

Liverpool FC recently hosted its Premier League Schools Tournament regional final.

Twenty schools from across Merseyside took part in the Under-11s competition at the Academy in Kirkby. Reigning champions Plantation Primary from Halewood won the opportunity to represent LFC at the national final, at White Hart Lane in May. Academy stars Jordan Rossiter and Marc Pelosi presented the trophy and runners-up medals to Bidston Avenue alongside club mascot Mighty Red.

Plantation Primary will join Cowley International College, who won the girls Under-13s regional final earlier this month. Westvale Primary School from Kirkby also won the Premier League Schools Tournament Shield after a close final decided by penalties. After the tournament each school received a Liverpool FC Foundation goodie bag.

Andrea Cooper, head of Liverpool FC Foundation, said: "I am delighted for both schools who have achieved this fantastic opportunity to represent LFC at the national finals in May.

"This is a great competition that fits the Foundation's main aim, which is to inspire people from all walks of life to make positive change happen for themselves and their communities."

Meanwhile two Liverpool FC Foundation coaches have completed a course delivered by The Johan Cruyff Foundation, also at Tottenham's White Hart Lane, consisting of team-building exercises and techniques for educating young people who can then work towards making a positive contribution within their community by organising and running a 6v6 tournament held on a Cruyff court.

Tony Cosgrove and Eddie Sullivan from the Foundation's Kicks Programme joined Matthew Williams, who is based at the Anfield Sports and Community Centre (ASCC), and coaches from Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur on the four-day course.



The coaches receive their certificates

PIECES OF EIGHT

An awesome new card collection celebrates Liverpool FC captain Steven Gerrard like never before





To celebrate the glittering career of one of Liverpool's greatest players, supporter Dave Williams has produced a series of illustrated postcards, highlighting some of the standout moments from Steven Gerrard's illustrious playing career.

Dave, a designer and working in the city of Liverpool, won acclaim for his inventive artwork last season when he produced a postcard chronicling each first-team fixture – his series featured in the monthly magazine.

His work proved popular among Reds supporters and now he has produced this special commemorative set to mark the skipper's outstanding contribution to the club.

The special collectors set comes with a stylish black gift box, imprinted with a silver foiled logo on the lid to keep the postcards in pristine condition.

The final set, scheduled for the end of the season, will also feature a ninth postcard featuring all of Steven's honours. When arranged in a 3 x 3 formation in order, the reverse of the Steven Gerrard Collection forms an image of the number eight, in tribute to the captain's shirt number.











An eighth postcard will feature Gerrard's final match for the Reds in May. The postcards will be printed on thick 350gsm card with a matte effect finish and are sized at 105mm x 148mm (A6). All prices include postage. Prices: £20 (including UK delivery), £22 (including European delivery), £25 (including worldwide delivery). The set can be ordered from liverpoolfc.com/store.



WELL VERSED

Aussie Red Mark Wilson writes to tell us he thinks Steven Gerrard is simply poetry in motion – and here's his heartfelt tribute to the Liverpool skipper to prove it…

The Perfect Journey

The footsteps pound the platform of the railway station,
The vocals echoed by the Whiston intonation.
The coal from the bonfire still smouldered,
A population sublime of a history unfolded.
The ageing dirt in the maiden boots,
A community connected by its grassroots.
The rivalled railway was where the train departed,
In Knowsley's hearts was where it started.

An estuary flowing on an elevated tide,
The ship from Whiston sailed into Merseyside.
Legs more gifted then the great King,
You could hear the cathedral churchbells ring.
A cop in a quandary of mystery,
A vigilant kid at the holy grail of history.
A yearning of burning desire,
Like a tiger jumping through the ring of fire.
Like a flower blossoming next to a field of corn,
Under the Scousers' skyline a star is born.

Trembling felt as far as the Steble fountain,
Rocks tumbling off Prescot mountain,
For the king remains unforsaken,
The Kops hinges completely shaken.
Red voices echoed under the Anfield piers,
A newfangled hero showered by 'pudlian tears.
Cups of silverware overshadowing the driftwood,
The icing on the cake misunderstood.
A cake so nourished and fulfilling,
An appetite so hungry and so willing.
Ribbons dangling so close to the fingertips,
Yet as far away out to sea, as the distant ships.
A kitchen sink so full under the foam and bubbles,
A dream now tangled in an affliction of troubles.

As the sun sets over the River Mersey,
The Anfield walls frame an irreplaceable jersey.
The loyal sweat showing an endless stain,
It's history engraved down memory lane.
The Kop's tears will never disappear,
As it celebrates the end of a remarkable career.
A legend worthy of King Kenny's throne,
Stevie Gerrard you will never walk alone.

SHOW US YOUR KOP CARS

Andy Smith was born in Liverpool in 1964 – the year Bill Shankly's team became First Division champions two years after winning promotion – and now lives in Brisbane, Australia. Despite being thousands of miles from home he watches every LFC game on TV and his house contains an assortment of what he calls 'Reds goodies'. Not content with that, his car also declares his allegiance. "I believe it's the most photographed car in Brisbane," he laughs.

In the next issue we'll show you the equally impressive set of wheels owned by Chrisanthos Savvides from Cyprus, who's written to tell us: "In my country LFC is more than a football club," Savvides explains. "It is a way of life."

If your car is writ large with Liverpool love, Tweet us a picture @LFC_mag and we'll put it in a forthcoming issue.



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Premiere league: the show gets underway

MOVIE MAGIC

LFCTV treats the Reds class of 1965 to a special feature

There's a must-see show coming up on LFCTV in May. It commemorates the 50th anniversary of the club's first FA Cup win and brings together some of the stars of Bill Shankly's team for a special screening of the 1965 final.

LFCTV producer Mark Platt, who wrote the best-selling book *Cup Kings: Liverpool 1965*, invited members of the side to the screening at the Woolton Picture House in the south of the city. Among them: Chris Lawler, Ian Callaghan, Roger Hunt, Ian St John, Tommy Lawrence, Willie Stevenson and Ron Yeats. During the course of the production process St John and Yeats also got to re-enact that famous moment when they brought the trophy home to the city for the first time and held it aloft on the balcony of Liverpool Town Hall.

Evertonians joked that the Liver Birds would fly away before we won it

Strange as it sounds now, there was a time when Liverpool struggled to win the FA Cup. Losses in the final of 1914 and 1950 had been accompanied by five painful defeats at the semi-final stage. It led to talk of a jinx on the Reds. Evertonians even joked: 'When Liverpool win the FA Cup the birds on the Liver Building will fly away!' On 1 May 1965 the supposed hoodoo was ended thanks to an extra-time victory over Leeds United at Wembley.



The lads outside the cinema

"People did the conga out of Lime Street station to celebrate"

This was the day generations of Liverpudlians thought they would never see – and grown men wept as history was made.

The game itself was a hard-fought one with both teams cancelling each other out during a tense battle. Ninety minutes failed to produce a goal but three minutes into extra-time Roger Hunt finally broke the deadlock with a stooping header from a cross by the heroic Gerry Byrne. Billy Bremner quickly silenced the Liverpool cheers with a sweetly-struck equalizer, but nine minutes from time Ian St John netted with a diving header to bury the hoodoo and clinch the club's long-awaited first FA Cup.

In a previous issue of the magazine brothers Bill and Alan Hendry, two Liverpool fans born and bred in Anfield, recalled what it felt like at the time. "The train journey back home was brilliant," said Bill. "It was packed – the only way you could get a seat was if someone else fell off theirs! People conga'd out of Lime Street in celebration and a lot of Liverpool fans went down to the Liver Building to see if the birds had flown away."


Come on you Reds!



Alan added: "The next morning we got up early to go into town to see the team with the cup, but we couldn't get near the Town Hall – there were thousands of people around. The FA Cup was much more glamorous back then. It was the only trophy to win. It's still my favourite success."

The show *Ee-Aye-Addio: 1965 And All That* airs on LFCTV on Friday 1 May 2015 at 8pm. Don't miss it!




Read all about it


Ron and the Saint at the Town Hall


WEMBLEY

TOPS OF THE KOP

How's this for a taste of Liverpool FC's terrific Spring/Summer 2015 Men's Collection?



1 Goldie Polo £25 (A5171)



2 Barnes Tee £30 (A3505)



Joe Allen wears the Cygnet Polo £35 (A5178)

3 Lifton Tee
£25 (A5129)



4 Striker Zip Through
£45 (A3568)



5 Clovelly Tee
£25 (A5168)



6 Cravern Tee
£20 (A5527)



Shop the Spring/Summer 2015 Collection in all Official Club Stores and the Official Online Store at liverpoolfc.com/store. For more details follow @LFCRetail on Twitter and Instagram.

Dirk Kuyt Instagram

@11dirkkuyt



9 March 2015
What a feeling!!! Fenerbahce – Galatasaray 1-0



18 January 2015
Having fun during dinner with the team.



2 January 2015
Sometimes a picture says it all. Respect Steven Gerrard #LFC #YNWA



30 December 2014
Match postponed! Really sorry for all the fans who travelled to Izmir. See you all in Kadikoy on Saturday.



24 December 2014
I'm very proud to receive the Sportsmanship and Fair Play Award



10 October 2014
Kuyt on the left, Kuyt on the right, Kuyt upfront and Kuyt at the back. Good luck guys - put it on!





16 September 2014
Yes!!! Liverpool is back in the Champions League tonight!!! Great memories to come!!! YNWA



27 August 2014
#supercup



25 August 2014
#supercup #2014 #yeeeeeeeees



18 August 2014
#traveling #tomorrow #friendlymatch #AS Roma – Fenerbahce



6 July 2014
Yes!



29 June 2014
29th of June the day I never forget!!!

David PRICE

Things won't always go our way – but tomorrow is another day



Controlling your emotions is a huge part of sport, particularly at the top level. In high-pressure situations that's really difficult. The crowd is screaming, opponents are trying to provoke you and the adrenaline is flowing.

I know what it's like to be in the boxing ring and you are so keen to win that you find it difficult to manage yourself and ensure you do exactly what you'd planned.

Aggression is an emotion. It might sound like an advantage to be really aggressive when you are trying to knock somebody out or win a tackle, but that's not always the case. Sometimes you can be too aggressive. My trainer always says you can knock somebody out without a smile upon your face. I think that's great advice.

Basically, what he means is you don't have to be emotionally aggressive if you are doing something physical such as boxing or trying to win a tackle. Usually it's the fighter or player who controls their emotions best that comes out on top in the end. Unfortunately, even those with great experience can sometimes lose control of themselves.

Steven Gerrard's sending-off against Manchester United in March was an example of that. Stevie immediately knew what he did was wrong and came out and apologised. I'm sure it has taken him a while to get over that red card and the defeat. As a supporter it always takes me a long time to forget about a loss, particularly if it's at the hands of a rival team. The time we lost to United in the last minute of the FA Cup game in 1999 after leading from near the start still annoys me now. Those games are all or nothing. You either suffer a defeat like that or enjoy a win that stays with your forever.

As a professional sportsman I find the feeling after a loss is similar to that of a fan. Nothing can console you. You have to move on. In boxing the problem is you have to wait a while for another fight to come along, but in football another game is usually around the corner.

The team will come through closer after the United defeat

The chance to make amends is something you have to grab. If Liverpool don't finish in the top four they will be determined to go all the way in the FA Cup instead. Personally I would say qualifying for the Champions League is a bigger priority but I also think it's important to win a trophy. As a football club we need to be getting some silverware in the cabinet on a regular basis, while the sooner Brendan Rodgers picks up his first piece of silverware the better it will be for him.

The FA Cup obviously gives us a great chance of success but of course nothing is guaranteed. Blackburn Rovers in the last eight of the tournament is a very difficult tie. As they showed at Anfield they are a physical team who won't be defeated easily.

Anyone who attended the initial game against Rovers would have really noticed the pace of the stadium redevelopment. It's great to see so much happening. I've always thought the club missed the boat when it came to expanding the ground back in the 1990s. The owners were probably short-sighted. Now it's happening and better late than never.

Obviously the new Main Stand will include plenty of corporate boxes. They are a huge part of football. I'm all for the 'regular Joe' going to the match at a low price, but football is a business and cash has to be generated. It's the same with boxing and whenever we are planning a fight we obviously take that into consideration.

My next bout is probably going to be in May, and I'm hoping to have another fight in Liverpool during the summer. It feels like everything is back on track for me. If I win both of those bouts that will certainly be the case.

Follow David on Twitter @DavidPrice_1

"After a loss you have to move on, another game is coming"


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